A MULTI-GENRE ANALYSIS OF MELVILLE'S PIERRE: THE PATTERNS ALMOST FOLLOWED

by

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Most studies of Pierre have approached the work with the assumption that it is basically autobiographical. It has been studied for what it reveals about Melville and criticized for the author's apparent lack of aesthetic distance. If, however, the work is not primarily an autobiography, it has been unfairly criticized. This study investigates the other genres to which Pierre may belong. Possible sources, definitions, and examples of each genre are presented and compared with Pierre. The genres examined include the novel of manners, gothic novel, satire, Elizabethan tragedy, psychological novel, and symbolist novel. Conventions and techniques belonging to each of them are adopted but modified by Melville to

increase the ambiguity of his own work.

Melville's detailed portrait of an American aristocracy and its morality suggests the novel of manners. Persons of various social classes are contrasted in the city as well as in the feudal society of Saddle Meadows. Belief in his caste's rigorous code of conduct creates problems for the aristocrat, who becomes either an outcast like Pierre or a hypocrite like Glen Stanly. Another contemporary type of fiction available to Melville was the gothic novel. Pierre adapts from the gothic cast of characters the dark and light heroines, the ineffective hero, and the Byronic central figure who is both hero and villain. It depicts the gothic struggle between a rational, ordered mentality and a chaotic primitivism. Multiple selves, entrapment, and inherited doom are other gothic characteristics shared by Pierre. A third contemporary type, the sentimental novel, is parodied in Melville's narrative effusions. The narrator uses Chaucerian irony toward Pierre and other characters. As a satirical prose narrative illustrating a philosophical proposition (the Plinlimmon pamphlet), Pierre is in many respects similar to a work like Candide. Considering the work as satire clarifies the position of the narrator and gives a reason for the sometimes offensive prose style.

Melville's enthusiasm for Renaissance drama is evident

in Pierre as well as in Moby-Dick. Pierre is modeled on the Shakespearean heroes Hamlet and Romeo, the book's structure is similar to the five-act drama, and much of the dialogue is in archaic language. In its total outlook and its handling of moral questions, however, Pierre is closer to other dramatists than to Shakespeare. The revenge tragedy and the villain play are the types which provide the closest analogues to Pierre.

Two twentieth-century forms, the psychological novel and the symbolist novel, are also examined. A great deal of the interest in Pierre is centered on the gradual disintegration of the main character's psyche. Melville's use of Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy and Dante's Inferno as textbook and metaphor, respectively, is explored. The final chapter deals with the symbolic significance of characters, setting, and action. Symbolist techniques such as indirection, vagueness of reference, synechdoche, dependence of meaning on context, and plurisignation are demonstrated in Pierre. Symbolism is an important tool for expressing the deliberate ambiguities of the book. Even more effective is Melville's eclectic juggling of genres, keeping the reader constantly puzzled about the nature of the book. Modifications of each form act to increase ambiguity, as well. The method of multi-genre analysis reveals complexities and subtleties in Pierre that might otherwise be missed. It is an appropriate technique for a writer like Melville, who experiments in form.

INTRODUCTION

The nineteenth century saw the rise of a great native literature in America; America was coming of age intellectually. Old-World forms fit Old-World ideas, but Americans needed something else. Thus, it was a time of experimentation in literary form. Emerson's theories of poetry and Whitman's practice, Thoreau's poetic prose, Hawthorne's romances and his and Poe's short tales, to cite a few, were attempts to find appropriate forms. Melville's search for usable forms led him from travel books to the Bible, from Elizabethan drama to the contemporary Gothic novel, and finally into poetry. No two of his books are of the same pattern except, possibly, the two he considered as pot-boilers, White-Jacket and Redburn. Each time he took up a project, the continuous development of his mind and art made it different from previous works. Often development took place during composition, so that the end differed from the beginning.

Melville was passionately fond of Shakespeare, but his career in literature is far more like that of another Renaissance Englishman, John Milton. Milton took up form after form, and seldom went back to one he had previously handled. Even the chronological outlines of their careers

are often parallel. Melville broke into print with Typee and Omoo, youthful works like Milton's "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso." Mardi is his Comus, Moby-Dick his Paradise Lost, Pierre his Samson Agonistes with similar autobiographical overtones, and Billy Budd his Paradise Regained. This final affirmative statement, though acknowledged to be a fine work, lacks the thunder of Moby-Dick and stands in relation to the earlier work as Paradise Regained stands to the more compelling Paradise Lost. "Bartleby" and "Benito Cereno," along with the other magazine stories, are his sonnets, a smaller form fully controlled and sometimes mastered so entirely as to define the limits of the form. Milton always began with the intention of writing something in an established mold--epic, sonnet, drama, etc.--and so produced splendid examples of each. Melville, however, began with story and idea, not form, and produced hybrid works fused of numerous established forms. As he expressed it, conflicting objectives created "a final hash, and all my books are botches." The narrator of Pierre is speaking of form as well as content when he decrees

> . . . that no one great book must ever be separately regarded, and permitted to domineer with its own uniqueness upon the creative mind; but that all existing great works must be federated in the fancy; and so regarded as a miscellaneous and Pantheistic whole.[1]

Separating the elements of Melville's fusions is

more than an idle academic exercise; it is an approach to Melville that is both new and revealing. When an author chooses to write in a particular genre, he makes a tacit promise to his readers. Each type of literature is aimed at a reader with a given degree of intellectual training, is expected to carry the proper amount of serious feeling on the spectrum between farce and high tragedy, demands a certain degree of concentration on the part of the reader, and presents an authorial persona of the proper type. When an author arouses these expectations but only partially fulfills them, tension is created. This is the case with Melville's generically variant fiction. The author then has a new instrument for his manipulations, that gap between conventional expectations and the book as he intends to deliver it.

Genre criticism is based on the assumption that we must ask, "What is it?" before we ask, "How good is it?" Attempts to circumvent the former question while attending to the latter end in a preference for a particular type of fiction which is used as the standard, to the detriment of works in variant forms. Such has been the result of the highly influential criticism of Henry James and, more recently, of Wayne C. Booth (The Rhetoric of Fiction); they preferred, nonetheless, very different standards. Northrop Frye's discussion of modes and genres in The

Anatomy of Criticism is primarily theoretical, as it is intended to be. A complete genre study for general purposes should include an historical study of the type, as well. The work in question should be compared to a theoretical or ideal example of a particular genre and to particular works in that pattern. Such is the method of the present study. Deviations from the norm must be carefully noted, as they reveal the creativity of the artist at work. By examining Melville's use of genres and his departures from conventional expectations, we may get a glimpse of the phantom known as authorial intention, and we will be able to trace the process of creative work in a way impossible to mere source study, important as that is to literary scholarship. Indeed, it would be very difficult to do a genre study without previous responsible source study, which fortunately has been done on Pierre.

Pierre has been chosen for this study because it offers fruitful grounds for multi-genre analysis, being obviously composed of several distinct types of literature, but also because, despite much study, it is one of the most maligned of Melville's works. Newton Arvin, one of our best Melville commentators, calls Pierre:

> . . . one of the most painfully ill-conditioned books ever to be produced by a first-rate mind. . . . And it must be said at once that Pierre's badness is an

> active and positive, not a merely negative one; it is the badness of misdirected and even perverted powers, but not of deficiency or deadness.[2]

In his excellent scholarly edition of Pierre, Henry A. Murray calls the book "a literary monster."[3] Even while providing notes on a multitude of sources for Pierre, Murray insists that the book is primarily autobiographical and confessional in nature, that the characters are members of Melville's family and circle of friends, and that the buildings, scenery, paintings, and even the very streets are drawn from life. Murray, who calls himself a "professing psychologist," naturally takes a psychologist's view of the work and treats it as one would treat a drawing by a schizophrenic. That is, he does not regard it primarily as art but as a document capable of providing much information about the patient's problems.

The depletion of writing Moby-Dick and the religious and philosophical struggle he was continually engaged in left Melville, in Murray's view, in a kind of paralysis. Pierre is in a "frantic, schizoid state"[4] while writing, and one suspects that Murray would use the identical phrase to describe Pierre's creator if he were not, like any good editor, careful to avoid extreme positions. Following Lewis Mumford's view in his biography of Melville, Murray sees the author as a "depleted puppeteer"[5] at this juncture. He considers Pierre to be important only for what it can

tell us about Melville, and that is a considerable amount. The action of writing avoids and postpones more direct action, claims Murray:

> By wrestling with these "meaningless" bi-horned enigmas of thought and persuading himself and others that his happiness depends on his finding the talismanic secret (which he knows is impossible), he dresses his mental preoccupations in robes of historic dignity, covers the naked facts of his personal distress, and indefinitely postpones the dreaded curative decision.[6]

Alan Holder[7] notices that there is a comic and satiric tone when Pierre is mocked for his innocence, but that the narrator is sympathetic to the mature hero. There is, therefore, "tonal uncertainty" in the book, a major flaw. Some recent dissertations place higher values on Pierre, partly because they seem to approach the book with fewer preconceived expectations. Mildred Travis[8] stresses the dense texture of meaning in the novel, with so many levels that the explicator requires vast resources. Raj Kumar Gupta[9] boldly, if over-enthusiastically, proclaims that "the novel is not a failure, as it is generally taken to be, but a successful literary performance and one of Melville's greatest literary achievements." This spirited defense, however, has not visibly affected the scholarly world, and critical estimates of Pierre remain uniformly low. Let us consider some of the reasons for this judgment.

One of Murray's reasons for considering Pierre as confessional is the speed with which it was written and its

inception so soon after the completion of Moby-Dick. This suddenness is considered as evidence of the compulsion which drove Melville at this time and impelled him to pour out his personal problems on paper. It may, however, be evidence that the book was planned well in advance and needed only to be given flesh. Melville had jokingly asked for "fifty fast-writing youths" to help him with the numerous works he was planning even while writing Moby-Dick. Pierre may well have been planned in its entirety as early as Evert Duyckinck's letter of August 4, 1850, written from Broadhall:

> The house where we live, Melville's is a rare place--an old family mansion, wainscoted and stately, with large halls & chimneys--quite a piece of mouldering rural grandeur--The family has gone down & this is their last season. The farm has been sold. Herman Melville knows every stone & tree & will probably make a book of its features.[10]

It is worth remarking that Melville's earlier work, Mardi, is always considered an unsuccessful attempt but that none of these psychological excuses are ever given for Mardi. It is, instead, agreed to be an insufficient fusion of conflicting modes and objectives. Pierre receives the treatment it does because some of its subject matter appears morbid and unhealthy, not typical of the outgoing sailor we get to know in Melville's other books. However, in its use of incest and insanity, Pierre is far less morbid than certain novels (most notably The Monk) in the

gothic mode of which Pierre is partially built, and its sentimentality is far more restrained than that of popular sentimental novelists. Why argue a loss of control when Melville dips into these other territories?

If Murray can trace the mansion at Saddle Meadows to Broadhall, we can also trace the Pequod to the Acushnet. Why treat Pierre as confessional when every one of Melville's books, even Israel Potter, is more or less autobiographical? The differences from life are at least as significant as the correspondences. The city boy, born into a family struggling with debts and surrounded by siblings and cousins, is hardly the wealthy and solitary Pierre. Nor is it adequate to account for the differences as wish fulfillment. Furthermore, the character Pierre really loses control, whereas Melville survived to old age and apparently achieved some kind of peace. Surely he caught a glimpse of Pierre's gulf from his own experiences, but the fact remains that he did not fall into it as Pierre does.

Perhaps it is because Melville here speaks of an author and his struggle to write that we associate Pierre with Melville himself, in New York to finish writing Moby-Dick as the first portion is already running through the press. In Arvin's phrase, "The stuff of Pierre was the stuff of Melville's daily sufferings as he wrote it."[11]

But Melville was also the adventurer and beachcomber depicted in Typee and Omoo, the innocent boy in Redburn, the metaphysically inclined Ishmael in Moby-Dick, as well as other men he painted. It is unfair to the book to decide that Pierre is Melville's true avatar, when he has presented us with so many others.

Rather than trying to explain Pierre (and also The Confidence Man, whose perplexities are often attributed to a confused mental state) in terms of psychological strains upon the author, an unlikely hypothesis when one considers that the magnificently controlled stories "Bartleby" and "Benito Cereno" belong to this period, it is more useful to examine Pierre as just another of Melville's books, another experiment in his attempt to find the literary form which could serve as a vehicle for his ideas. The following study will examine the types of literature which were combined to form the mold for Pierre. As they prove to be such mutually incompatible forms, on the surface at least, any critic who wishes to dislike Pierre may find ample grounds for the flaws he sees in the cracks that are liable to penetrate such a mold.

Criticism contemporary with the publication of Pierre took issue with its moral premises. Now that time has removed the insistence on a certain kind of morality

in fiction, critics find Pierre objectionable because, having an intimate knowledge of Melville's personal life, the modern critic thinks he sees Melville revealing what he would prefer not to know. For a critic who knows and likes Melville, Pierre has rather the same effect as a perusal of Keats' love letters has upon an admirer of that poet. This, however, is our problem and is external to the work itself. It has to be overcome if we are to be fair to the book. Melville certainly never expected his readers to know enough about him to receive this impression. One of his minor annoyances was that so many of them refused to believe that "Herman Melville" was an actual name and not a pseudonym. As for serious critical study, the man who expected to "die in a gutter" could hardly have foreseen that he would become the object of so much scholarly industry. Had he suspected his future fame and the amount of attention his works would receive, he might well have been more careful to disguise his borrowings from life.[12]

The only legitimate objection to Pierre from the standpoint of "New Criticism" would be an artistic one. "New Criticism" as a dogma has many problems, but in this case it is justifiable as a corrective to the bulk of criticism about this novel, tending as it does to concentrate on autobiographical elements. Artistic objections

to Pierre legitimately exist. It has been alleged that the language of the book is artificial and inappropriate, and that the narrator fails to keep a proper artistic distance from his hero. Murray makes the latter charge, Mumford the former. These positions can be and have been contested.[13] Some of the "distancing" elements are the pamphlet, the "Young America in Literature" chapters, and the occasional appearances of Shakespearean and Dickensian comedy. Some of the stylistic excesses may well be parody. Both "faults" are best understood and explained when we have examined the components that make up Pierre.

Previous critics, usually without explicitly stating so, have generally considered Pierre as an autobiographical novel. Goethe's Wilhelm Meister books, Thomas Wolfe's novels, and preeminently Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man are among the works that serve as implicit standards for that genre. Lacking their aesthetic distance, Pierre suffers by comparison with works like these. Thus a genre classification lies behind the value judgment of Melville's novel. Reexamining the genre can lead to a fairer value judgment, or at least to a judgment solidly based on comparison with works of comparable type. In the following pages we will consider Pierre as a novel of manners, psychological novel, gothic

novel, Menippean satire, Shakespearean tragedy, and symbolist novel. Besides freeing Pierre from consideration solely as a thinly disguised autobiography, the method of multi-genre analysis can be useful in studying other works, especially The Confidence Man, yielding further insights into the structure of the works themselves and eliminating some of the standing misconceptions about Melville as a craftsman.

Notes

[1]Herman Melville, Pierre: or, The Ambiguities, ed. Henry A. Murray (New York: Hendricks House, 1962), p. 334. All subsequent citations from Pierre will be from this edition.

[2]Newton Arvin, Herman Melville (New York: William Sloan Associates, Inc., 1950), p. 219.

[3]"Introduction" to Pierre, p. xciii.

[4]Ibid., p. xvi.

[5]Ibid., p. xiv. The phrase is Murray's, not Mumford's.

[6]Ibid., p. xvii.

[7]Alan Holder, "Style and Tone in Melville's Pierre," Emerson Society Quarterly, 60 (Summer, 1970), 76-86.

[8]Mildred Klein Travis, "Toward the Explication of Pierre: New Perspectives in Technique and Meaning," Dissertation Arizona State University, 1971.

[9]Raj Kumar Gupta, "Form and Style in Herman Melville's Pierre: or, The Ambiguities," Dissertation University of Pittsburgh, 1964. Quoted from Dissertation Abstracts, 26 (1965), 1632.

[10]In Jay Leyda, The Melville Log: A Documentary Life of Herman Melville (New York: Gordian Press, 1969), p. 383.

[11]Arvin, Herman Melville, p. 227.

[12]If, indeed, the correspondences are so exact, it is strange that Melville allowed the novel to be published while so many of the persons he allegedly depicted were still living. Certainly his mother would not be flattered by the portrait of Mary Glendinning, if she is indeed the original.

[13]See Gupta (note 9) and also Lawrance Thompson's "Foreword" to the Signet edition of Pierre (New York: New American Library, 1964).

CHAPTER 1

PIERRE AS NOVEL OF MANNERS

When Richard Chase stated in The American Novel and Its Tradition that the romance, not the novel, is the dominant form of American prose narrative, he became the spokesman for a view that has held center stage for a considerable time. It is quite rare, therefore, to find a discussion of the American novel of manners, since this is a form almost exactly opposed to the romance. American writers themselves have made statements which support the view that true "novelistic" material is lacking in their country. Hawthorne's well-known complaint about the problems of gathering material in America is found in the preface to The Marble Faun. In his biography of Hawthorne, Henry James paraphrased and extended this lament to include the grievances of the novelist as well as those of the romancer:

> No state, in the European sense of the word, and indeed barely a specific national name. No sovereign, no court, no personal loyalty, no aristocracy, no church, no clergy, no army, no diplomatic service, no country gentlemen, no palaces, no castles, nor manors, nor old country houses, nor parsonages, nor thatched cottages, nor ivied ruins; no cathedrals, nor abbeys, nor little Norman churches; no great Universities nor public schools--no Oxford, nor Eton, nor Harrow; no

> literature, no novels, no museums, no pictures, no political society, no sporting class--no Epsom nor Ascot! Some such list as that might be drawn up of the absent things in American life--especially in the American life of forty years ago, the effect of which, upon an English or a French imagination, would probably, as a general thing, be appalling.[1]

Even James Fenimore Cooper, exalter of the American pioneer spirit, made a similar complaint about the absence of interesting manners in his native land. "I have never seen a nation so much alike in my life, as the people of these United States."[2] Nevertheless, points out James Tuttleton in his new study, The Novel of Manners in America, these same writers did succeed in producing something we can call a novel of manners. Since the class differences in America are not so great as those in Europe, the groups depicted in American novels are closer together in status and their actual differences are more subtle than those in European novels. The contrast between basically similar sets of manners is not always obvious, especially to the critic who believes that the novel does not deal with this subject. By assuming that American novelists do treat manners, however, Tuttleton arrives at a rather impressive list of works that, either in toto or in substantial part, meet the following criteria:

> By a novel of manners I mean a novel in which the manners, social customs, folkways, conventions, traditions, and mores of a given social group at a given time and place play a dominant role in the

> lives of fictional characters, exert control over their thought and behavior, and constitute a determinant upon the actions in which they are engaged, and in which these manners and customs are detailed realistically--with, in fact, a premium upon the exactness of their representation.[3]

Hawthorne's The House of the Seven Gables, for example, deals with at least two distinct social groups. There are the ancient, though decayed, Pyncheon aristocracy and the thoroughly modern Holgrave, descendant of the peasant Maules. By economic standards, all of the characters except the Judge could be called lower middle class. But the tragedy of Hepzibah's keeping a shop is founded on her aristocratic ideal of conduct, while Holgrave's radical politics emanate naturally from a descendant of the dispossessed. In his Blithedale Romance, Hawthorne chooses his groups by occupation rather than by heredity. The manners of the dilettante writer, the professional reformer, the hired farmer, the liberated and unliberated woman are all drawn to a nicety.

Henry James, author of the most outspoken complaints against America as inspiration for a novelist, is commonly recognized as the American who comes closest to writing a true novel of manners. His broadest contrast is between American and European manners, a study which occupies the whole of The American and plays a very important part in novels such as The Portrait of a Lady and Roderick Hudson. He also deals with subtler contrasts, however, such as the

difference between Hudson and his benefactor, both Americans. In The Princess Casamassima he deals with the extremes of European society, from an Italian prince to a group of radical working men.

Among the works of Cooper are several that concern themselves with the manners of social groups. Cooper's first novel, Precaution, is an imitation English novel of the Jane Austen ilk. After this, as he hit his stride in the romance and had much success, his early interests did not disappear. The Pioneers, for example, highlights the various stages of civilization represented by the Indians, Natty Bumppo, the common settlers, and the Templeton family. The love story in The Pathfinder is predicated upon certain differences in culture between Natty and a well-educated girl from the city. The Prairie deals with a lower class of whites, an upper class, and two varieties of Indian society. Natty Bumppo is accepted by all but belongs to none, having his own particular ideas about his caste and conduct. Each character acts according to the ideas of his own group, his "redskin natur'," his hunter's code, his patriarchal clan norms, or his truly cultured sense of honor. Homeward Bound and Home as Found are Cooper novels which deal explicitly with American manners.

The work of Cooper which comes closest to the novel

of manners is, however, the trilogy known as the Littlepage Manuscripts. These three books--Satanstoe, The Chainbearer, and The Redskins--are written as a family saga which traces the history of a wealthy American family from pre-Revolutionary times down to Cooper's contemporaneous present. In the introduction to Satanstoe, the narrator, Cornelius Littlepage, specifically states that his purpose is to delineate the manners and mode of life of his own class, for the edification of future generations. He considers this step necessary because of the absence of a native literature capable of performing that function. Of course that statement is certainly true of the America in which the story is set, but one suspects that Cooper intended it as a comment upon his own time, as well. Corny Littlepage's son and great-grandson narrate, respectively, The Chainbearer and The Redskins.

Satanstoe, although it contains plenty of wilderness adventure and takes in the battle of Ticonderoga for good measure, nevertheless keeps love interest in the foreground. Corny Littlepage's courtship of Anneke Mordaunt begins in the small city of New York amid the rivalry of British soldiers, some of them members of the high nobility; it continues in the quaint Dutch town of Albany, where Dutch and English cultures are contrasted; and it is finally rewarded in a wilderness outpost during an Indian siege.

Another level is added by the presence of Jason Newcombe, a New Englander by birth, whose provincial and Puritanical mores are a foil to Corny's York Colony ideas and customs.

The Chainbearer is also unified by a courtship, and one which touches upon class lines. Mordaunt Littlepage is in love with a girl who, although of good family and well educated, is so poor that she has "carried chain" in a surveying party directed by her uncle. The question is whether this labor has demeaned her below marriageable status in the eyes of Mordaunt's family. Although she is finally accepted, it is quite clear that there is a vast gulf between her honest, hard-working uncle (after whom the book is named) and the moneyed class represented by the Littlepages. A third group is represented by the family of squatters who occasion the complications of the plot. Like the family of Ishmael Bush in The Prairie whom they so much resemble, the Thousandacres family has a definite code of honor about everything except the right to real property.

Satanstoe and The Chainbearer provide a background for the antirent issue discussed in the third book, The Redskins. In the earlier two books, the Littlepage family fights first Indians and then squatters to retain possession of large wilderness tracts, which finally become settlements. These estates are then threatened by a strong popular

movement to compel the sale of huge manors to the individual tenants. To Cooper, this was really a moral issue. If democracy is to survive, says wise old Hugh Roger Littlepage (Mordaunt's son) to his nephew of the same name, it must have regard for the rights of a few great landlords as well as those of numerous tenants and voters. The Littlepages have undeniably clear title to the land, as established in their earlier history. Thus they are morally in the best position of anyone in the book except for the single virtuous clergyman. The common people and the descendants of Jason Newcombe, who oppose the Littlepage title, are depicted as inferior in social poise as well as in morals. The question of what makes a true gentleman is discussed also in terms of the ancient Indian, Susquesus, who receives homage from everyone. "Sus" has in common with the Littlepages two traits that seem to epitomize aristocracy for Cooper: his moral rectitude is outstanding, and he refuses to do manual labor.

Other nineteenth-century American novelists of manners cited in Tuttleton's study include Howells (The Rise of Silas Lapham and Their Wedding Journey, in particular) and Twain (parts of Huckleberry Finn and The Gilded Age). But although Melville anticipates, occasionally, things found in Howells, Twain, and James,

as he anticipates a great deal of still more modern thought, his models in the American novel of manners are limited chronologically to Cooper and Hawthorne. With those two, however, he could have found a variety of examples of the mode, as the preceding pages have demonstrated.

Melville's connection with Cooper is clearly established by his own statements; and though he never knew Cooper as a friend, he seems to have been quite familiar with his work. He reviewed Cooper's The Sea Lions and The Red Rover for Duyckinck. When asked to attend a memorial dinner in honor of Cooper, who had recently died, Melville sent the following letter of praise:

> I never had the honor of knowing, or even seeing, Mr. Cooper personally; so that, through my past ignorance of his person, the man, though dead, is still as living to me as ever. And this is very /much/; for his works are among the earliest I remember, as in my boyhood producing a vivid, and awakning /sic/ power upon my mind.... It is certain, that he possessed no slightest weaknesses, but those, which are only noticeable as the almost infallible indices of pervading greatness. He was a great, robust-souled man, all of whose merits are not even yet fully appreciated....[4]

The contrast between this last statement and the famous prescription he made for Hawthorne ("needs roast beef, done rare") is striking. Among the Cooper stories which enthralled young Melville may well have been the Littlepage

books, which ought to have interested his Dutch-English relatives. It is interesting that this tribute to Cooper was penned the year before the publication of Pierre, which has many similarities to Cooper's anti-rent trilogy.

Pierre is the only one of Melville's novels which is set in Cooper country, New York. The history of the Glendinning family is very similar to the Littlepage saga, and both families hold enormous tracts of land under the manorial system. Both title deeds go back to an original purchase from the Indians, though in Cooper there is also a grant from the King of England. Pierre's great-grandfather defended the estate from Indian assaults. The American founder of the Littlepage family held "the King's Commission"; but it was his son, Corny Littlepage, who did most of the Indian fighting. Corny Littlepage won his bride during such an assault; old Glendinning, wounded and unhorsed but still directing his troops from his stationary saddle, met his death in another. This incident gave the name Saddle Meadows to Pierre's ancestral home.

Pierre's grandfather, again like Corny Littlepage, was a major-general in the Revolutionary War. Pierre himself is comparable to the youngest Hugh Roger Littlepage, narrator of The Redskins, in being the sole male heir of an illustrious and wealthy family. Pierre is younger,

however, and lacks the sophistication which foreign travel has given to young Littlepage. Lucy Tartan, like Anneke Mordaunt of Satanstoe, has both city and country residences. The love for the country always brings Lucy to Saddle Meadows at about the same time every year. Anneke always tries to be at Lilacsbush, her rural seat, in time to see the lilacs bloom. Otherwise, however, there is little similarity between Anneke, probably the most believable of Cooper's female characters, and Lucy, probably the least so of Melville's.

The Littlepage family is of mixed Dutch and English ancestry, combining the good qualities of both. Melville does not specifically state that the Glendinnings have Dutch blood. However, if they do not, the passage which begins, "These far-descended Dutch meadows lie steeped in a Hindooish haze . . ." and his explanation of the existence of vast manors under the Dutch system of colonization would have no logical place in the book. Pierre's French name probably indicates English ancestry with Norman influence rather than direct contact with France in the past few generations. This surmise is based on the paucity of French settlers in York Colony when the family was founded there, the clearly English sound of the Glendinning surname,[5] and the symbolic use of France as represented by Isabel and her mother in contradistinction to the New-World openness of Pierre.

In Satanstoe, Cooper explains the Dutch suspicion of formal education, especially as imparted by colleges, which were instruments of the English-speaking majority. The true Dutch family decides against sending their son, Dirck Follock, to college. The hybrid Littlepages do send Dirck's boyhood companion, Corny. The pure New Englander, Jason Newcombe, is not only a college graduate but is himself a pedagogue. With respect to schooling, Mary Glendinning is apparently on the Dutch end of the spectrum; she exults, "I thank heaven I sent him not to college."[6] What she and the Follocks oppose is not the acquisition of knowledge, but exposure to institutions whose spirit is foreign to the family's.

Much discussion in The Redskins is devoted to the comparison of Europe and America, and most of the talking is done by a very Jamesian character, the elder Hugh Roger Littlepage. The spokesman's sentiments are strongly in favor of his native America, though he prefers to reside in Europe because there are more amusements there for a bachelor like himself. He believes guardedly in democracy, but says that America needs a class of gentlemen residing among the other folk in order to improve the morals and manners of the nation. The superiority of the Littlepage family in both respects is strongly emphasized by the disreputable activities of their tenants. There is no

doubt that the landholding family improves the moral tone of their neighborhood.

The question of the desirability of an American aristocracy and the problem of defining such a class are subjects often found in the American novel of manners. One thinks of The Great Gatsby, with its contrast between old and new money, or of Bromfield Corey's complaint (in The Rise of Silas Lapham) that we can never have an American aristocracy if sons persist in the vulgar habit of working for a living. Melville, like Cooper, places great emphasis on the moral duties of the upper class. More accurately, he separates the merely moneyed from the truly moral in the contrast between Mrs. Glendinning and Lucy, or Glen Stanly and Pierre. The unfortunate Isabel seems to be a kind of test; Pierre and Lucy can accept her, Pierre's mother and Glen cannot. Both Pierre and his mother purport to believe in "a maxim of the father of Pierre" that no one can be a gentleman who is not also a true Christian. But the Christianity of Mary Glendinning is that of the Falsgraves of the world, who reject both the sinner and the bastard child, contrary to the example of the founder of their faith.

Melville obviously gave much thought to the definition of aristocracy, as we can see from the long argument in Book I claiming that certain American families are at

least as old as the English nobility. But instead of doing reverence to all aristocrats, as Cooper tends to do, he subjects the Glendinning family to an unmerciful probing which destroys their moral pretensions. Pierre, the only one who passes the moral test, is not economically capable. He cannot support himself by his own means. Cooper's brief portrait of the gentleman in Susquesus, the ancient Indian, calls for two things: moral rectitude and the lack of demeaning labor (therefore, either property or a military profession). Melville's characters have either moral or economic competence, but not both. With his lifelong tendency to polarize things, Melville shows the two elements of aristocracy as apparently incompatible.

Melville was himself a descendant of the aristocracy he writes about, and probably the germ of Pierre is revealed by Evert Duyckinck's letter to his wife in August of 1850 describing a wainscoted Melville family mansion where he was vacationing with the author.[7] Consider, however, that Melville's method in all his works was to supplement his personal experience by using other books about his subject. Cooper's Littlepage Manuscripts are the most obvious source he could have found. The generation-by-generation parallels between the Glendinning and Littlepage families, as well as the atypical, for Melville, amount of space devoted to the problems of

defining aristocracy and comparing America with Europe, suggest at least an early reading of Cooper's three novels by Melville, and possibly even their use as a direct source.

Cooper wrote something like a novel of manners, and Melville wrote a book somewhat like Cooper's; but as the rule of transitivity is insufficient, let us examine Pierre according to Tuttleton's criteria to determine how much it actually resembles the novel of manners. Tuttleton's definition requires (1) that the ideas and customs of a distinct social class determine the actions of its members, and (2) that these manners and beliefs are detailed realistically. Melville begins by very carefully defining the social class of his protagonist, including a discussion of his ancestry and a favorable comparison of his family with the English nobility. The ideas and customs of this class prevented the marriage of Pierre's father with the highborn Frenchwoman whom he loved. Her background being too mysterious, she was not respectable enough to be a good match. Here we have the reverse of the situation Henry James would set up in The American, where the Frenchwoman's family refuses the American because he, too, comes without known antecedents.

Marriage denied, Glendinning's love affair resulted

in the Frenchwoman's disappearance and the subsequent birth of Isabel. Again, social considerations kept her father from acknowledging the girl or even putting her into his will. Thus, she was left unprovided for when he died. Such extreme reluctance can be explained by the fact that the Glendinnings, like Cooper's Littlepages, sincerely believe that they ought to be patterns of morality. Failure to live up to the highest of ideals would be a betrayal of the class, and exposure of such an offense would eclipse the family's pretensions to belong to the superior classes. The standard justification for the existence of an aristocracy is that its combination of moral and mental superiority, coupled with extensive means, permits it to do more for the commoners than they would be able to do for themselves. If, however, aristocrats become debased in character, they lose most of this justification. That, of course, is what happened to the English aristocracy very early in its history, and what turned political theorists away from hierarchical organization and toward legal equality. An American aristocracy, lacking the support of tradition, can exist solely by actually deserving its elevated station. Its members are therefore in a rather perilous position.

Pierre's complete belief in Christian ideals as

espoused by his own class is the direct cause of his downfall. Had he been the son of a tenant farmer, there would have been other ways to provide for Isabel than the one he was obliged to select. The family code of ethics would not be so rigid that he would be forced to choose between her and his inheritance. Should such an unlikely choice arise, he might well have felt free to spurn Isabel in favor of himself. But because he has been taught that a Glendinning must be a pattern of perfect Christian conduct, he unhesitatingly chooses self-sacrifice. The ethic has been so strongly impressed on him that even the shattering of his paternal idol only makes him cling to it more strongly.

Mary Glendinning's actions are also motivated by her social position, though she is concerned with the appearance of virtue more than with the substance. Pierre can tell that she will never accept Isabel because she cannot bear to have the fallen Delly Ulver even residing in her vicinity. The surface must be pure. She believes firmly that her late husband was a marvel of rectitude. This belief is essential to her self-esteem (and to her family status), so Pierre rightly guesses that she would resist with all her force any attempt to change it.

Glendinning Stanly is a more extreme version of the superficially upright aristocrat. He will have

nothing to do with Pierre once the younger man has compromised himself; thereby Glen upholds the social code, which is violently opposed to extramarital sex. (Pierre is commonly supposed to have become involved illicitly with Isabel even while engaged to Lucy, which compounds his original offense by adding desertion.) Glen is totally lacking in charity toward Pierre, a more basic Christian value. He is really quite a Jamesian character. He is the American who has become Europeanized through extensive travel, and exhibits all "the evils of enlarged foreign travel . . . in young and unsolid minds."[8] He not only despises American manufactures, but has turned his back on homegrown morality as well. His sophistication puts "cool Tuscan policy"[9] in place of his boyish impulsive generosity, as a chronological review of his letters to Pierre reveals. The contrast between Glen and Pierre is in part that of European and American manners and mores, following the standard assignment of innocence to the Americans and craft to the Europeans. Like Henry James' expatriate Americans, Glen is highly sensitive to the opinion of his peers and would view a scandal as the worst sort of calamity. Pierre and his questionable wife would constitute a scandal which would place Glen's immaculate reputation under a strain. Reputations are easily ruined; Daisy Miller loses hers without doing anything unethical,

simply by the strength of innuendo. Glen's associates never look beneath his apparently moral surface, of course, to see the appalling selfishness that maintains it.

A very different type of young nobleman is represented by Frederic Tartan, Lucy's brother, who twice invites Pierre to duel. His extreme sensitivity about Lucy's honor and his own bespeak a kind of thinking that is already archaic, like the duel itself, by Melville's time. Not even Pierre accepts the code of the duel--he fires first, without warning. Melville's better aristocrats do tend to be based on earlier literary models, especially Shakespearean ones. Frederic is scarcely more modern than Laertes. Pierre and Lucy, in their courtship scenes, speak and act as if they have no place in the nineteenth century. Their relationship is that of knight and lady, not modern boy and girl. In part this tendency can be explained by the paucity of actual models available to Melville for his aristocrats. In part it is probably due to a sense that an aristocracy preserves the essence of the past, the best of the past, as no other institution can. That is so only for the true aristocrats, however, and that means those whose moral natures are superior. Those who are only superficially noble are quite modern and adaptable, and, incidentally, rich.

If, then, the actions of several characters are motivated by their membership in a certain social class, the first stipulation of the definition is met. The second is that the manners must be realistically presented. Certainly it can be said that Melville takes great pains to show Pierre and his mother in their natural surroundings. We see them at breakfast, visiting the local sewing circle, and in their private quarters. We even know what they eat. We see Pierre at his wooing and in his misery. We know what he wears, how he amuses himself, how his room is furnished, both in Saddle Meadows and in his urban tenement, where the niggardly domestic arrangements are presented in great detail. These things are realism in the most basic sense.

Melville is also able to present social interactions in a realistic manner. Two of the most skillfully drawn scenes in the novel depict Pierre's and Lucy's engagement. Mrs. Tartan is presented as an inveterate matchmaker. This occupation is the major interest in her life. She invites Pierre to breakfast and then leaves the room on a pretext, hoping that propinquity will reinforce the attraction between Pierre and Lucy. When Pierre notices that the apparently casual arrangement of music on the piano exposes "Love Was Once a Little Boy," he recognizes that he has been maneuvered into a trap.

Nevertheless, he is "entirely willing to be caught, when the bait is set in Paradise, and the bait is such an angel."[10] One factor in his willingness is probably that the match is socially appropriate. Lucy's family is "of the best" and her wealth is large. Both mothers--mothers are the authorities on appropriate marriages--approve of this one. The formal engagement occurs after another realistic vignette, the arrival of Lucy's outraged brothers to interrupt a "hugging-match" on the sofa. These scenes give the reader insight into the actual conduct of people in Pierre's social class. They are also handled with a gentle irony characteristic of the novelist of manners in his drawing-room dramas.

Outside the homes of his own class, Pierre plays the role of young aristocrat among the families of his tenants. The girls in the sewing circle scene drop their eyes and grow silent in the presence of the Glendinnings. Accustomed to such deference from his social inferiors, Pierre is rather surprised when Charlie Millthorpe, now urbanized, treats him as an equal. Millthorpe is a pivotal figure who begins life as the son of a poor tenant farmer and later sets up as an independent bourgeois. Although he is materially little better off, Millthorpe thinks he has improved his social status by his move. What he has actually done is to join a circle where a different social

organization prevails. All of the Apostles are equal, though on a fairly low level. But even this democratic order has its Mohammed, Plinlimmon, who rules it without partaking of its hardships. The semi-feudal order of Saddle Meadows has at least the merit of producing some superior characters. Melville sets up not only a contrast between social classes but also a contrast between two modes of social organization, the stratified and the democratic, the Old World and the New. This complex presentation of social relationships requires an acute perception of American life and manners, and reveals a thoughtful weighing of the merits of democracy. Cooper dealt extensively with this subject in the long dialogues of The Redskins.

The problem with Pierre as novel of manners is that despite many skillful touches, Melville's upperclass characters and their actions do not present a picture that rings entirely true. They speak in archaic language, filled with metaphysical conceits. The plot is, as most contemporary reviews complained, quite fantastic. These judgments are made according to one's innate idea of how human beings speak and act, an external standard really. If the people presented in Pierre did really exist, having the beliefs and environment given them, their actions and the sentiments

they utter would be wholly consonant with their portraits as painted by Melville. The book is internally consistent. One may complain that Melville has an insufficient conception of the group he writes about and therefore is unable to present them well. If so, however, he has Cooper's aristocrats with their moral passion for his precedents. Cooper may perhaps take the blame for some of the departures from our externally determined reality. Melville's lower-class characters are less fully drawn but they do come across better. Millthorpe and Delly Ulver have more understandable motivations, as they lack the aristocrats' obsession with moral rectitude.

To the extent that it reports the intimate details of the daily life of an American upper class and shows characters performing actions which are attributable to the beliefs and manners of that class, Pierre can be called a novel of manners; it is certainly the closest thing to such a novel that Melville ever wrote. The entire first portion of the book, up to the flight from Saddle Meadows, fits the genre fairly well, both by meeting our definition and by resembling other works which fit this definition. After this, Pierre more closely resembles other types of fiction.

This situation suggests a question of intention. Did Melville intend to write a novel of high society which

would be inoffensive and quite marketable, but found himself unable to resist making the book deeper? Or did he use the novelistic trappings only to clothe an allegorical tale which he had in mind from the outset? The former hypothesis seems more likely, considering some of Melville's own statements. When he promised Mrs. Hawthorne a "rural bowl of milk" he probably intended to deliver one. Had the destruction of the Christian idealist been the initial plot, he would probably have called this, as well as Moby-Dick, a "wicked book." Melville's chronic conflict between what would sell and what he could not help writing is nowhere more clearly seen than in Pierre; and tracing the elements of the novel of manners in this book helps to demonstrate that conflict.

NOTES

[1]Henry James, Hawthorne (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1956), pp. 34-5.

[2]James Fenimore Cooper, Notions of the Americans Picked Up by A Travelling Bachelor, ed. Robert E. Spiller (New York: 1958), pp. 108-9 as quoted in James W. Tuttleton, The Novel of Manners in America (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1972).

[3]Tuttleton, p. 10.

[4]Letter to Rufus W. Griswold, December 10, 1851. In Jay Leyda, ed., The Melville Log (New York: Gordian Press, 1969), p. 440.

[5]Glendinning is the name of a family in two of Walter Scott's novels, The Monastery and The Abbot.

[6]Pierre, p. 21.

[7]"The house where we live, Melville's is a rare place--an old family mansion, wainscoted and stately, with large halls & chimneys--quite a piece of mouldering rural grandeur--The family has gone down & this is their last season. The farm has been sold. Herman Melville knows every stone & tree & will probably make a book of its features." The Melville Log, p. 383.

[8]Pierre, p. 256.

[9]Ibid., p. 261.

[10]Ibid., p. 31.

CHAPTER 2

PIERRE AS GOTHIC NOVEL

The term gothic in its most specific literary sense describes a type of novel which flourished between 1764, the date of The Castle of Otranto, and 1820, the date of Melmoth the Wanderer, and which, by means of stereotyped settings and characters, appealed to the primal human fears, especially the fear of the unknown. In the earliest gothic novels there are often blatantly supernatural occurrences, but always accompanying and emblematic of human evil. Later, the supernatural sometimes disappears entirely and the human subconscious itself furnishes the unknown elements. In the two centuries before Freud, the gothic story was practically the only constructive discussion of the subconscious.

The problem of definition is complicated by the facts that gothic stories continued to be written after this period, and that from its inception to our own times, this type of story has experienced continual development. In the thirty or forty years following Walpole's original novel, the genre received certain infusions from German writings, most notably the motifs of the heroic robber, the doppelganger, and the secret tribunal.[1] There was a

gothic drama produced from the novels, which in turn influenced other novels. Romantic writers dealt with irrational elements as well, so that it is impossible to separate the legitimately gothic from the Romantic movement. Some of the most intriguing works of the gothic school, such as Wuthering Heights and The Woman in White, date from Victorian times, and the gothic is represented today by such popular novels as Rosemary's Baby, The Exorcist, and the romances of Daphne DuMaurier, Victoria Holt, and Anne Maybury, among others.

We also have a school of modern Southern novelists in the United States who are often called gothic because they deal with bizarre characters, old families, decay and degeneration. If the term gothic is to have any meaning as applied to Flannery O'Connor, Carson McCullers, Truman Capote, and (sometimes) William Faulkner, one would have to show that although the "trap" for the protagonist is internal, a result of environmental and hereditary influences, his situation is calculated to arouse approximately the same fears as a more obvious source of terror. Indeed, an excellent case can be made for the Southern gothic school as the legitimate heir of Poe's psychological gothicism and the Byronic hero's self-made trap.[2]

In his pioneering studies of the gothic mode, Montague Summers[3] lists the elements which mark the gothic

and which, in the place of corresponding elements in the sentimental novel, transform that novel to gothic. Such elements include the haunted castle, the subterranean passage, the danger-infested forest, and the old manuscript. Other props include thunderstorms, lights which always blow out, trapdoors, and a host of others made familiar to us through generations of storytelling. The cast of characters includes a villain who, as Evans[4] notes, is the personification of the gothic castle--barbarous, irrational, self-willed, and, in a word, medieval. The heroine, who is menaced by the villain, is "modern," genteel, virtuous, and rational. The hero is an undeveloped character who is powerless to help the heroine but who is noble enough to be a suitable match for her. There is usually another female who is under the villain's control and who often meets the terrible fate which only menaces the heroine.

Because the hero spends most of his time in dungeons while the villain holds the stage, Evans claims that actors in the dramatized versions of gothic tales preferred the villain's part, and he became the sympathetic character that we now call the Byronic hero. Gothic romance became characterized by this ambiguous hero-villain, whose problems are internal and psychological and whose stature is practically superhuman. One can see this transformation clearly by comparing the fully Byronic character of Melmoth the Wanderer with the more obviously

villainous Manfred, Duke of Otranto. Evans' argument that the transformation occurred in the drama is reinforced when we recall that Romantic treatments of Shakespeare's Shylock often turned this evil-doer into a defiant hero, by exactly the same process-- the actor's preference for the villain's part.[5] By Melville's time the gothic villain had become more hero than villain. Another development in the cast of characters is the rising importance of the second heroine, who is usually dark while the original girl is fair. In many novels the two girls carry opposite symbolic meanings. (This is especially clear in the Victorian examples, Wuthering Heights and The Woman in White.) Melville, as we shall see, was fully alert to this possibility.

Given the characters and machinery, what is to distinguish the truly gothic novel from the book which, like many of Sir Walter Scott's, uses gothic elements in some other kind of novel? It must be a matter of total effect, a judgment as to the degree of threat, terror, horror, or awe which the reader derives from the work as a whole. Thus, while the witches in Shakespeare's Macbeth are themselves frightening, the effect of the whole work is tragic rather than gothic. Such a judgment is, of course, subjective. Although Shakespeare and his fellows used many gothic elements,[6] a fully gothic work is not to be found in Elizabethan or Jacobean canons; the totality of

terror is not possible in a divinely ordered universe, where the right is upheld in the afterlife if not on earth. A possible exception to this statement is Marlowe's Doctor Faustus, which I am inclined to call gothic for its heroic villain, its emphasis on terror, and its lack of an important "good" character to detract from the powerful figure of the protagonist. The playwright, according to his roommate, held unorthodox religious beliefs which might well make this "different" vision possible.

The titillation of vicarious danger is vital to the early gothic novel, so the victim is usually a young female because of her attractiveness for the villain and her physical inability to defend herself effectively. There is, as Leslie Fiedler[7] points out, an important sexual component in the relationship between villain and victim. But in later stories, where the villain is not entirely villain, the struggle takes place within him, and the female victim becomes far less important. In that kind of novel, the two forces at war are the same as those represented by the struggle between "modern" heroine and "medieval" villain. Evans calls these opposites eighteenth-century rationalism (essentially still in force today) and the eighteenth century's idea of medievalism, which amounted to total barbarity. Essentially, he sees the gothic novel as depicting the struggle between

civilization and the barbarity in human nature which is always opposed to culture. In a recent dissertation, D.T. Reilly[8] calls these opposites "natural" and "unnatural"; the former encompasses benevolence, selflessness, and other social norms, the latter is selfish and callous. The "modern" or "natural" force is trapped, imperilled; the outcome is a metaphysical statement.

Perhaps a better way of describing the opposition is by a fusion of these two discussions and the terms control and chaos. The rise of the gothic novel parallels the rise of Romanticism in Europe and the collapse of a consensus on the world order. People were and still are in doubt about all of the really important religious and metaphysical questions; therefore, the threat to order became total and terrifying. One response to this absence of consensus is the creation of new myths, attempted consciously by such writers as Shelley and Keats. As James Baird[9] explains, Melville lived in a time when cultural symbols were becoming meaningless and the artist had to fuse new ones. Gothicism is another response to this threat. Whether chaos is represented by the medieval castle (historical gothic), by one's own irrational impulses (psychological gothic) or by a symbol like the white whale, man must try to gain control over it and over his own fate. Freud explained that neurotics differ from normal people in the intensity of their ideas and behavior, not in kind. The gothic struggle may be somewhat facetiously

described as a milder version of the obsessive-compulsive neurosis--the desire to control one's own life. Increasingly, in later novels, man loses the struggle and chaos stoves his boat.

An interesting subclass of the gothic novel is the "explained supernatural" story as practiced by Radcliffe and by America's Charles Brockden Brown. In this type of novel, the phenomena are all explained at the end by various natural means, and the apparent sway of chaos is replaced by the rule of clear reason. Poe's stories of ratiocination are descended from this type of story. It is significant that the technique of final explanation disappears as we progress in time and in Romanticism; Ann Radcliffe herself eventually introduced a ghost which she did not explain or excuse.

America's earliest major novelist, Charles Brockden Brown, was purely gothic and was a favorite of Shelley's.[10] R.W.B. Lewis[11] calls attention to the similarities between Brown's Arthur Mervyn and Pierre. He does not, however, claim direct influence, but explains the resemblances as resulting from both authors' use of the Adamic ideal placed against the corrupt city. Brown's plague-ridden Philadelphia is as garishly real as Melville's New York on the night Pierre arrives.

But America's real gothic period came later, in the nineteenth century, just as Britain was turning away

from gothicism. Several of Washington Irving's sketches contain folk-tale elements of terror. Hawthorne is gothic in many of his tales, and both The House of the Seven Gables and The Marble Faun make extensive use of gothic machinery. Even the anti-Catholic bias which is expressed in so many British gothic novels is preserved in The Marble Faun. Melville was living and writing in the middle of America's own gothic revival--a revival not of an architectural style, but of the literary mode associated with that architectural style. It would be truly remarkable if Melville were not influenced by the current flowing in his country.

We know that Melville was familiar at least with Walpole's The Castle of Otranto, Beckford's Vathek, Godwin's Caleb Williams, Bulwer-Lytton's Zanoni, Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, and two volumes of Carlyle's translation, German Romance[12]--all, apparently, before the composition of Pierre. A recent dissertation[13] cites Frankenstein, Caleb Williams, and especially Zanoni as sources for the language, ideas, and incidents of Pierre. In addition, Clarel and Billy Budd contain references to the work of Ann Radcliffe, and Melville's journal recalls Schiller's Ghost-Seers.[14] From Byron himself, and from Moore's Life of Byron, he had direct contact with the Byronic hero. Murray considers Byron the most important

single influence on Pierre. Furthermore, Melville was an admirer of Hawthorne and can be presumed to know at least some of the works of Poe and Irving. Of his familiarity with Cooper, who also uses several standard gothic conventions, we have spoken in a previous chapter. Melville clearly had a rich store of gothic literature to use as a partial model.

Newton Arvin[15] claims that Melville's landscape scenes tend to be rather savage, like those of Radcliffe and of the Salvator Rosa school of painting which she admired. His use of painting and portraiture in Pierre recalls the alarmingly vigorous portrait in The Castle of Otranto, the miniatures and portraits in numerous Radcliffe novels, Poe's "Oval Portrait," and possibly the mysterious picture of Melmoth the Wanderer. Another similarity is the importance of the Faun of Praxiteles and the portrait of Beatrice Cenci in Hawthorne's Marble Faun. A portrait of Beatrice Cenci, though not Guido's, is presented at a significant moment in Pierre. Perhaps Melville and Hawthorne discussed the thematic use of paintings and statues in their Berkshire days. Isabel's musical skill is also a commonplace attribute of a gothic heroine, but the instrument is usually a lute. The transformation of lute into guitar may owe something to Roderick Usher's "wild improvisations of his speaking guitar"[16] which he plays to alleviate his mental distress, just as

Isabel does.

Melville never drew a haunted castle, but there is the "castellated forecastle" of the San Dominick and the references, in that same opening passage of "Benito Cereno," to cloisters and friars. Billy Budd is the victim first of a villain and then of a cruel system (the tribunal), and he is described in rather feminine terms. Jackson in Redburn is as much gothic villain as Billy Budd is gothic victim. Ahab is, as many critics have remarked, the Byronic hero par excellence. But it is in Pierre that Melville makes his greatest incursions into the gothic property-room, adopting many of its techniques and using them in original ways.

In Pierre, we approximate the effect of the gothic castle in the forest "shaggy with pines and hemlocks"--despite the echo of Evangeline, it is Cooper's use of the forest as a setting for the villain's machinations which should be recalled here--which emits a "moaning, muttering, roaring, intermitted, changeful sound: rain-shakings of the palsied trees, slidings of rocks undermined, final crashings of long-riven boughs, and devilish gibberish of the forest-ghosts."[17] This is in Pierre's own sunshine world. Isabel recalls a house which is certainly ruinous and gloomy; later she says that its architecture resembles that of a French chateau:

> Some of the windows were rudely boarded up, with boards nailed straight up and down; and those rooms

> were utterly empty, and never were entered, though they were doorless. But often, from the echoing corridor, I gazed into them with fear; for the great fire-places were all in ruins; the lower tier of back-stones were burnt into one white, common crumbling; and the black bricks above had fallen upon the hearth, heaped here and there with the still falling soot of long-extinguished fires. Every hearth-stone in that house had one long crack through it; every floor drooped at the corners; and outside, the whole base of the house, where it rested on the low foundation of greenish stones, was strewn with dull, yellow molderings of the rotting sills....[18]

The long cracks and the uniform decay of the house suggest Poe's "House of Usher." The conceit of a "doorless and windowless house" is later applied to Pierre himself, and the echo of the word "doorless" from this passage carries definite gothic connotations.

Melville tells us at once that Pierre is the last of his race. "A powerful and populous family had by degrees run off into the female branches; so that Pierre found himself surrounded by numerous kinsmen and kinswomen, yet companioned by no surnamed male Glendinning, but the duplicate one reflected to him in the mirror."[19] The sole surviving male heir of a house generally meets with calamity, and the decay of a "house" or family is commonly depicted in the gothic novel. One has only to recall Otranto's single heir, crushed by a gigantic helmet; the singular fate of Roderick Usher; the younger Melmoth, who inherits the family wealth and has a nearly fatal accident; crazed Wieland who, though he has children, murders them and tries to kill his only sister; the ill-fated Master of Ravenswood,

who loses wife and life; gentle Donatello of The Marble Faun, who becomes a murderer; childlike Clifford Pyncheon of The House of the Seven Gables, jailed for murder; and a host of others who inherit their family dooms and, succumbing, end their lives.

Sometimes no reason is given for this doom, but often it is the result of an ancestor's sin, such as Manfred's ancestor's usurpation of the throne of Otranto. Pierre's father, like many evil-doers, sinned successfully in his time, but retribution comes upon his children. "The sins of the father shall be visited upon the children to the third generation," quotes Rev. Falsgrave. In his preface to The Castle of Otranto, a book which Melville owned, Walpole uses that same quotation to describe the apparent moral of his own tale. Falsgrave is pleading for a generous interpretation of the Biblical injunction in the case of Delly Ulver's child, but the morality which is upheld in the novel is that of vengeance and retribution.

Several critics have noted that Glen Stanly is Pierre's double. The inversion of the surname "Glendinning" and the etymology of "Pierre" and "Stanly," both derived from "stone," contribute to this likelihood. Glen takes Pierre's place in Saddle Meadows and tries to marry Lucy, an attempt which Pierre fears will succeed. "Indeed, situated as he now was, Glen would seem all the finest part of Pierre, without any of Pierre's shame; would almost

seem Pierre himself--what Pierre had once been to Lucy."[20] Pierre's destructive career culminates in his murder of Glen. After his progressive renunciations, this murder is representative of the violence Pierre has done to himself.

The double is important in romantic literature and was one of the gothic elements England borrowed from Germany. Some famous doubles are found in Conrad's The Secret Sharer, Wilkie Collins' The Woman in White, and Poe's "William Wilson." Poe's story is a brilliant variation on the theme. The story is narrated by the "evil" double who has killed his "good" side. Significantly, a man named Lord Glendinning is deprived of a wealthy estate by the machinations of the evil double, until the good Wilson intervenes.[21] This story may well have influenced Pierre, in which the darker, more mysterious character kills his visible and open self. But the "ambiguity" of the novel makes it impossible to call one good and the other evil. Glen is selfish indeed, but Pierre does more real harm.

The double in literature closely resembles what Jung called the "shadow", a figure who appears in dreams and is of the same sex as the dreamer, but who represents the hidden and suppressed aspects of his nature. In Pierre, as elsewhere, Melville seems to anticipate the Jungian insight when he shows that both aspects are necessary for an integrated personality.

Another frequent motif in gothic literature is incest, usually taking place within the doomed family. Both The Castle of Otranto and Walpole's drama The Mysterious Mother deal with incest, the play to an extent that rendered it impossible to present. Emily in The Mysteries of Udolpho is pursued by a relative, an uncle by marriage. The protagonist of The Monk rapes his sister, without knowing her relationship to him. Among other Romantic examples, there are Shelley's The Cenci and Byron's Manfred. Several critics[22] stress the influence of Byron's works and life upon Melville, and Melville must have been aware of the rumors about the poet and his half-sister that circulated in literary society. The relationship between Roderick and Madeleine as delineated by Poe in "The Fall of the House of Usher" is not openly incestuous, but their "mysterious sympathies" are certainly unhealthy. With these possible models, we need not be surprised at the strong, though veiled, hints of incest between Pierre and Isabel. The first of these occurs when Pierre proposes the pseudo-marriage:

> The girl moved not; was done with all her tremblings; leaned closer to him, with an inexpressible strangeness of an intense love, new and inexplicable. Over the face of Pierre there shot a terrible self-revelation; he imprinted repeated burning kisses upon her; pressed hard her hand; would not let go her sweet and awful passiveness.
>
> Then they changed; they coiled together, and entangledly stood mute.[23]

Another, still more obvious, is the scene in their New York apartment when Isabel attempts to comfort the discouraged adventurer. "She blew out the light, and made Pierre sit down by her; and their hands were placed in each other's.

'Say, are not thy torments now gone, my brother?'

'But replaced by--by--Oh God, Isabel, unhand me!'"[24]

Isabel displays what is obviously sexual jealousy of Lucy, and even opens the door so that Lucy can see her and Pierre kissing. Although they inflame one another, Pierre and Isabel are generally credited with resisting temptation. Instead of following their sexual impulses, they make what Leslie Fiedler[25] calls the typically American choice of death over sex in literature. Frederic Carpenter, also, sees incest in Pierre as symbolic and dramatic rather than literal and sensationalistic. "This machinery of incest is a dramatic symbol for the sense of sin which the worshippers of purity have always associated with the sexual experience."[26]

The sister-lover, like the double, resembles a figure described by Jung. He called it the anima or animus, whose sex is opposite to the dreamer's and who embodies the qualities which either sex stereotypes or other factors have caused the dreamer to repress.[27] An anima is sometimes a femme fatale like Keats' "Belle Dame Sans Merci," sometimes a creative and uplifting force like Dante's Beatrice,

sometimes merely an alter ego like the shadow. It is perhaps inevitable that the anima should sometimes be represented by a sister, since the sibling relationship is a reasonable facsimile of the spiritual kinship between dreamer and anima. Being actually of the same flesh and blood, similar in education and often in appearance (the Usher twins, Manfred's "She was like me in lineaments.../ But soften'd all, and temper'd into beauty."), siblings are far closer in many ways than spouses. Charles Brockden Brown's Wieland, in his delusional state, calmly butchered his wife and children but hesitated to harm his sister. In the gothic mode, especially, where we find a strong emphasis on heredity and on the hero's inability to merge his single identity with the rest of humanity, the motif of incest is logically found. The only companion for one who, by his very blood, is set apart ("From my youth upwards/ My spirit walk'd not with the souls of men"--Manfred) can only be another person in the same plight. The motif of incest follows logically from the creation of the Byronic hero.

The sister-anima functions on more than one level in Manfred, as she does in Pierre. On a realistic level the union has tragic consequences which lead to Manfred's final misery. On a psycho-symbolic level, the woman represents a gentler and better self which complements the "masculine" nature of Manfred himself. Their broken union

has left Manfred fragmented; unable to act positively, he can only attempt suicide.

Matthew Lewis' The Monk is interesting in that it has two female characters who are potential animas and with whom the protagonist has sexual relations. At first he is tempted by Matilda, who awakens all the passions that have remained buried throughout Ambrosio's ascetic life. He always assents to her suggestions, after some struggle with his conscience, because she proposes the things which his own passions urge. She embodies all of the animalistic and especially sexual desires that the monk has repressed.

Antonia, who is secretly Ambrosio's sister, has a lesser role in the story. She is innocent, generous, pious, and pure, but quite susceptible to love. This latter quality saves her from being a saintly nonentity. She resembles Pierre's fiancee, Lucy, even in this one deviation from the simpering stereotype; Lucy's stubbornness in joining Pierre is the only action she makes which surprises us. In this story, however, the "light" heroine is the one who is the protagonist's sister; Melville reverses that pattern. Antonia becomes the object of Ambrosio's lust and is finally raped by him. This act brings about his ruin on the factual level, since her desperate escape brings the officers of the Inquisition to Ambrosio's hiding place. On a spiritual level, his violation of one who is a part of himself, and

a higher and still innocent part, is the final step in his corruption. Henceforth he, like Poe's William Wilson, is dead to the world. His formal pledge to the Devil and his subsequent seizure by that gentleman only confirm the ruin that takes place in his soul when he rapes his sister and violates his better self.

Both Matilda and Antonia function as animas, and their symbolic significance as evil and good is, by the end of the novel, unmistakeable. Melville blurs the distinction at the end of his novel, just as he confuses the good and bad aspects of Pierre and Glen. The terms "angel" and "angelic" are several times used to describe Lucy, and yet she has no monopoly on virtue. Isabel's conduct is blameless throughout the novel, and both she and Pierre are also tagged with the word "angel."[28] Isabel's effect on Pierre is in some respects highly salutary--certainly she gets him out of the intellectual torpor of his Saddle Meadows life, and with her he begins his career as a thinker and an independent man. Was the direction wrong in itself, or was Pierre merely unequal to the challenge? When Pierre cries out in agony, at the end, "Away! Good Angel and Bad Angel both!" we must wonder which girl is meant by which epithet. The stronger the anti-Christian bias and antitraditionalism one attributes to Melville, the greater is the likelihood that Isabel represents the "good."

Something of this moral ambiguity is already to be

seen in The Monk. Matilda is, at the end of the novel, clearly demonic. But at the beginning, she is so pure that she sits as a model for a wonderful portrait of the Virgin, representing every female virtue. The interaction between her and Ambrosio, prompted by an unseen Devil, corrupts them both. But Lewis is careful to depict their temptations so strongly that a reader could easily see them as nearly blameless, simply unfortunate enough to be the objects of Satanic machinations. Ambrosio's love of virtue as depicted in his portrait of the Virgin (Matilda's portrait) is the point of entry for his weakness. He already loves Matilda, in the form of the Virgin, before he meets her. Similarly, Pierre's love of virtue, mistaken at times, causes him to expose himself to all the temptations which exist in the world, and which have been excluded from his sheltered youth.

Besides the obvious unity of the twin heirs of the House of Usher, Melville's contemporary Poe also explored the anima in another story, "Ligeia." As in the case of Madeleine Usher, we have the dead woman reanimating a corpse in order to rejoin a man with whom she shares "incredible mutual sympathies." In this story, however, she uses another woman's body, not her own. Again, there are two possible anima figures. The artist-narrator rejects the "light" heroine Rowena and the culture she represents in order to bring back Ligeia with all her mystery. The narrator has

nearly attained the irrational dream-state which Poe considered to be the essence of truth when Ligeia, who has been his preceptress, is taken from him. There is a hint that he is himself the cause of this separation when he tries to define the "expression" in her eyes, applying rational criteria to a phenomenon outside rationalism. Without Ligeia, he is lost. He turns to another woman, whose name bears reverberations of the heroine of Ivanhoe, and who represents the rational and orderly life which England seems to suggest in Poe. Soon he rejects Rowena, and Ligeia, who is associated with Germany and with Greece, returns to him--rather horribly, however.

The relationship between Heathcliff and Cathy in Wuthering Heights and that between Quentin and Caddy in The Sound and the Fury are two further examples of the sibling serving as another self. The Monk and "Ligeia," are, however, closer to Melville in time and similar to Pierre in their use of the double anima. Again, we have the same configuration between Melville and his predecessors as we have with the use of the shadow. The "traditional" type of story clearly separates good and evil figures. Poe plays with a reversal of the two; Melville blurs them.

Isabel clearly resembles a dark heroine like Ligeia in her foreign ancestry, her dark coloring, and her espousal of values opposite to those of the dominant culture, the

everyday world. To Pierre, raised in an atmosphere of social propriety, rationalism, and placid Christianity, she is at first a supreme mystery. Murray, followed by Pops[29], calls Isabel Pierre's anima. The dream in which she is first presented to Pierre and their shock of mutual recognition also indicate that she is so.

> All these aspects of the anima...can be projected so that they appear to the man to be the qualities of some particular woman. It is the presence of the anima that causes a man to fall suddenly in love when he sees a woman for the first time and knows at once that this is "she."[30]

Isabel's association with what was probably a madhouse and the childlike, "primitive" character she bears serve to indicate some of the values she represents. The description Isabel gives of the "unspeakable" house is, incidentally, very similar to the madhouse scene in Charles Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer, a novel with an interestingly Byronic hero. (The claustrophobic imprisonment of Israel Potter in Melville's later novel also recalls an underground entrapment in Melmoth.) The things we call primitive--openness, freedom, a religion which is instinctive rather than intellectual--are what Pierre has lacked, residing in such a refined atmosphere. He has longed for a sister; he has recognized a psychological incompleteness, and turned, as Baird's Ishmael claims Melville turned, to "primitive" systems of meaning. There is little doubt that Isabel's

is a primitive nature. She is richly passionate, and her comprehension of divinity is rather like the Polynesian's intuition of mana. The power which speaks from her guitar is hardly the Calvinist god. We must recall Mardi and Yillah here. Yillah is a nearly albino blonde; however, she goes to Hautia's island, indicating a special identity between the dark and light ladies. The female primitive also appears in Melmoth the Wanderer, in which the Faustian hero is nearly redeemed by the childlike innocence of his Indian maid.

Jung said, and Melville again seems to anticipate him, that the self which embraces and compromises with the anima can forge a new, more integrated personality. But Pierre is an absolutist. When he accepts Isabel, he abandons his world and sinks deeper and deeper into hers. He throws away his previous self and becomes so like his "dark" side that he generates a second anima. Lucy, whom he has abandoned, reappears to champion the virtues admired by Western culture. Pierre is never able to integrate the two girls. His inability to compromise is his real problem. When he first receives Isabel's letter, he dimly perceives two angels giving him opposing advice.[31] Finally, when he cries, "Away! Good Angel and Bad Angel both!--For Pierre is neuter now!" he seems to have made little progress in his search for truth. Jung saw embracing the anima as part

of the process of healthy individuation; but in gothic fiction at least, the compromise is not successful and the sinister aspect takes over, as it does in The Monk. Protagonists like Ambrosio and Roderick Usher ruin themselves in the physical as well as the psychological action of their stories. That way, as Melville well knew, lies madness.

In nonsymbolic terms, Lucy and Isabel again resemble heroines of romance, especially gothic romance. Lucy is blonde, passive, fragile. She is a retracing of the portrait of Ivanhoe's Rowena and "Ligeia"'s Rowena, of Alice in The Last of The Mohicans and Ellen in The Prairie; of Hilda in The Marble Faun and Priscilla in The Blithedale Romance; and especially, according to Murray, of Lucy Ashton in Scott's interestingly gothic novel, The Bride of Lammermoor. If Bride is indeed a source, Lucy's mother, Lady Ashton, is a probable model for Mary Glendinning; this may remove some of the imputation that Maria Melville was the original of that highly unflattering portrait. Though fragile, the blonde heroine somehow manages to survive the worst Radcliffean horrors. Lucy, too, exhibits surprising strength when she resolves to join Pierre. Her mother, like Lucy Ashton's, has always dominated Lucy, and is therefore thoroughly infuriated by this sudden resistance.

Isabel, dark and mysterious, is Lucy's complement; she is Rebecca, Ligeia, Cora, Inez, Miriam, or Zenobia.

This character is more explicitly sexual than the light heroine, and except in Poe, who preferred darkness, she does not get the hero at the end. She is often racially mixed, recognizably foreign. Miriam and Rebecca are Jewish, Cora part Negro, Isabel part French, Ligeia a compendium of ancient racial characteristics. Apparently the Anglo-Saxon imagination prefers to project its sexual component onto other races. That Melville was aware of the stereotypes he used is indicated in Isabel's outcry, "Heard ye ever yet of a good angel with dark eyes, Pierre?--no,no,no--all blue,blue,blue--heaven's own blue--"[32] as well as in his description of the portrait of Beatrice Cenci by Guido, recalling

> that [contrast] ...sometimes visible in the maidens of tropical nations--namely, soft and light blue eyes, with an extremely fair complexion, veiled by funereally jetty hair. But with blue eyes and fair complexion, the Cenci's hair is golden--physically, therefore, all is in strict, natural keeping; which, nevertheless, still the more intensifies the suggested fanciful anomaly of so sweetly and seraphically blonde a being, being double-hooded, as it were, by the black crape of the two most horrible crimes (of one of which she is the object, and of the other the agent) possible to civilized humanity--incest and parricide.[33]

Again Melville modifies the usual, or expected, pattern of rewarding the light heroine for her fortitude by marriage to the hero. The dark heroine, if she survives uncorrupted, is usually obliged to find another mate. But in Pierre our expectations are defeated and our perplexity thereby

increased. Neither heroine is rewarded, but both suffer equally. Ambiguity alone survives, since the values represented by neither heroine are upheld.

Pierre's claim to the title of gothic hero is clear and uncontested. Like every defiant Faustian figure from Walpole's Manfred to Byron's Manfred, he has defied social opinion to pursue a personal goal, ruining others and destroying himself. By Melville's time, as we have shown, this figure is more hero than villain; his destructive actions result from some noble flaw which impels him to act as he does, or from his hereditary fate, that "loathed identity" which at one time so disgusts Pierre.

The goal for which he aims is not a sordid one. Even the Duke of Otranto pursued his victim out of a desperate need to preserve his paternal line, not out of lust. Like Faust, who is the ancestor of all gothic heroes and whose reanimation by Goethe proclaimed the Romantic period, Pierre defies both man and God in order to champion human power. Battling as he does against the limits of the human condition, Pierre is doomed to failure. But whereas Marlowe's Doctor Faustus goes off after a terrific struggle, Manfred of Otranto retires from the stage with his castle's collapse, Ambrosio the Monk and Melmoth the Wanderer are pushed off cliffs by demons, and Ahab's ship goes down with all hands, Pierre is not allowed even a decently dramatic

exit. He dies unnoticed in a sordid prison. Again, Melville juggles the convention so that the indications of Pierre's value are removed. We do not know whether he is any better than the man he murdered, Glen Stanly. Glen fills the role of weak hero in that he loves Lucy and is powerless to rescue her. He would be, socially, a proper match for her. But he does not survive to marry the heroine, for Pierre kills him. In the magic world of story, villains are not supposed to have any real power over heroes. Melville steps beyond this polite convention to the possibility of complete jeopardy. This was the sort of thing which outraged his public.

We have gothic motifs and characters in Pierre; do we, then, also have gothic machinery? In a classical sense, no, except possibly for Pierre's dungeon (the subterranean passage, the castle vaults), and the brief mention of the pine forest and Isabel's chateau (castle-substitutes). There are no true castles, no trapdoors, not much time spent in the forest (lacking robbers, anyway), and the adverse weather is simply cold, not spectacularly stormy. There are, instead of castles, drab and narrow rooms to which the characters are self-confined. The only journey in the novel is the brief passage from Saddle Meadows to New York; the true journey in the novel is inward and psychological rather than a passage through a danger-infested

forest. These are precisely the characteristics remarked by Irving Malin in his study New American Gothic as belonging to the Southern gothic school in America today. Malin also explains that in place of "old" gothic's image of the reflection--the mirror, the portrait--one frequently finds multiple selves represented by distinct characters. Melville's inclusion of two figures which can be seen as animas and one which we discussed as a shadow in this work is apparently a step in this direction. Again, Melville anticipates the twentieth century.

We have established that Melville was familiar with the gothic mode, that he borrowed some of its motifs and adapted its most essential characters--villian/Byronic hero, light and dark heroines, and ineffective hero. There are, as Higgins[34] has shown, faint verbal echoes from some of the gothic stories Melville knew, and especially from Bulwer-Lytton's Zanoni. Some scenes and characters may have been adapted from Melmoth the Wanderer and The Bride of Lammermoor, though the absence of hard evidence that Melville had read those two books makes this hypothesis difficult to prove. Unlike the trappings of the novel of manners, the gothic elements are distributed throughout the novel from beginning to end; they begin with the explication of Pierre's lineage, and intensify with the appearance of Isabel. But in order to be fully gothic, the novel must

pass the test of total effect, appealing to man's deepest irrational fears such as the fears of entrapment, darkness, sexuality, death, and the unknown. Pierre is trapped, first in his own existential position and finally in a material dungeon. Cold, violence, and insanity pervade the latter part of the novel. Pierre verges on violating the incest taboo both with his mother and his sister. He murders a close relative, not only a murder but a violation of the family. The unknown is represented by his philosophical delvings, which remove him from the safety of the philosophical base he has always known.

Pierre is a rational modern man who abdicates his rational control and becomes a creature of chaos, a "doorless and shutterless house for the four loosened winds of heaven to howl through."[35] This situation is the logical descendant of the "modern" heroine's entrapment by a "medieval" villain. Chaos rules not only Pierre's life but, if he is correct, the entire universe. He has had a glimpse of the "nil."[36] Later novelists would come to accept this void and even make a positive virtue of it. But Melville, having glimpsed the subconscious before Freud and the anima before Jung, and writing in a convention which shows encounters with the irrational as terminating in disaster, saw and presented the most terrifying implications of the absence of rational control. This is the threat which

menaces not only Pierre but the reader as well.

We have shown that Melville modified certain traditional aspects of the gothic novel to increase the ambiguity of Pierre. In the earliest gothic novels, vice and virtue are almost totally distinct, although the two sometimes occur in the same character. Walpole chose incest as the theme of The Mysterious Mother, his gothic drama, because "...it was capable of furnishing not only a contrast of characters, but a contrast of virtue and vice in the same character."[37] There was, however, no doubt about which was which; indeed, the gothic form often degenerated into moralistic novels. In Pierre, at one point, both concepts, virtue and vice, are derogated as equally meaningless by the bewildered protagonist. Even the Byronic hero, whose representations sometimes go far towards hinting at psychological determinism, has recognizably evil traits. Pierre has no such clearly marked characteristics.

Poe, a heretic, inverted the two heroines and extolled the dark over the traditional light one. Melville balanced the two so that neither is rewarded, and neither symbolic value is upheld. Pierre's end is ignoble, so that it is far from certain whether he is hero or fool. The moral black and white becomes totally grey, a problem Melville explored further in The Confidence Man. His use of machinery is more subtle than that of his gothic predecessors, and he

anticipates the Southern gothic writers in his use of constricted space, the inward journey, and multiple selves. He was able to make these modifications because he had absorbed the gothic ethos but did not, apparently, feel restricted by the previous forms of its written expression.

This fact is clearly demonstrated by the gothicism of Moby-Dick, to which we have referred in passing. Ahab is obviously a Byronic hero; there are supernatural events such as the flaming corposants and the magnetized compass; the struggle is between humanity (the "Anacharsis Clootz deputation" aboard the Pequod) with its machinery, tools, and brains, and the primeval powers of the Leviathan. And yet Moby-Dick is not a gothic novel, for Melville embodied the same struggle which we find in the gothic mode in a new situation. Instead of being pursued, humanity is the pursuer. The hunt and the voyage of discovery are the bones of Moby-Dick, not the chase and imprisonment of the heroine. The stereotyped cast of characters and the motifs which we have discussed in relation to Pierre are entirely absent from Moby-Dick; there are no women, even. Pierre and Moby-Dick both deal with the struggle between human control and chaos; the former uses the form of expression we call gothic, though with imaginative modifications, while the latter novel invents its own situations. It is possible, therefore, that Pierre was actually planned

first, since it is likely that the greater departure from precedence would come after the lesser.

NOTES

[1]Bertrand Evans, Gothic Drama from Walpole to Shelley (Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1947), pp. 116-131.

[2]A study of this sort is Irving Malin's New American Gothic (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1962).

[3]The Gothic Quest: A History of the Gothic Novel (London: Fortune Press, 1938).

[4]Evans, Gothic Drama.

[5]Bernard Grebanier, The Truth about Shylock (New York: Random House, 1960).

[6]See the introduction to Edith Birkhead's The Tale of Terror: A Study of the Gothic Romance (New York: Russel and Russel, 1963).

[7]Love and Death in the American Novel (New York: Stein and Day, 1966).

[8]Donald T. Reilly, "The Interplay of the Natural and Unnatural: A Definition of Gothic Romance," Dissertation University of Pittsburgh, 1970.

[9]Ishmael (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1956).

[10]See Summers, The Gothic Quest, Chapter 1.

[11]The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1971).

[12]Sealts, Melville's Reading (listed alphabetically).

[13]Brian Higgins, "The English Background of Melville's Pierre," Dissertation Univ. of Southern California, 1972.

[14]Newton Arvin, "Melville and the Gothic Novel," New England Quarterly, 22 (1949), 33-48.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Edgar A. Poe,"The Fall of the House of Usher" in Edward H. Davidson, ed., Selected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe (Boston: Riverside Press, 1956), p. 101.

[17]Pierre, pp. 128-9.

[18]Ibid., p. 135.

[19]Ibid., p. 6.

[20]Ibid., p. 339.

[21]It is generally believed that Melville culled the name "Glendinning" from Scott's novels The Monastery and The Abbott. It is entirely possible, however, that he derived the name from Poe, who in turn may have taken it from Scott.

[22]Murray as well as Edward Fiess, "Byron and Byronism in the Mind and Art of Herman Melville," Dissertation Abstracts International, 25 (1965), 4145A; and Joseph J. Mogan, Jr., "Pierre and Manfred: Melville's Study of the Byronic Hero," Papers on English Language and Literature, 1 (1965), 230-240.

[23]Pierre, p. 226.

[24]Ibid., 320-321.

[25]Love and Death in the American Novel is based on the premise that American literature tends to deal with sex in gothic terms.

[26]Frederic Carpenter, "Puritans Preferred Blondes: The Heroines of Melville and Hawthorne," New England Quarterly, 9 (June, 1936), 260.

[27]M-L Von Franz, "The Process of Individuation," in Carl G. Jung, ed., Man and His Symbols (New York: Dell, 1971).

[28]Pierre, p. 169.

[29]Martin L. Pops, The Melville Archetype (Kent, Ohio: Kent State Univ. Press, 1970).

[30]Von Franz, p. 191.

[31]*Pierre*, p. 73.

[32]*Ibid.*, p. 370.

[33]*Ibid.*, pp. 413-414.

[34]"English Background of Melville's *Pierre*".

[35]*Pierre*, p. 399.

[36]Nicolaus C. Mills, "The Discovery of the Nil in *Pierre* and *Jude the Obscure*", *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 12 (Summer, 1970), 249-262.

[37]Horace Walpole, as quoted in Summers, p. 34.

CHAPTER 3

PIERRE AS SATIRE

The genre critic has always had great difficulty in dealing with the satiric work. Hard as he tried, Northrop Frye could not replace the terms irony and satire with anything more specific, though he did create a distinction between them and a pair of working definitions:

> The chief distinction between irony and satire is that satire is militant irony: its moral norms are relatively clear, and it assumes standards against which the grotesque and absurd are measured.[1]

Irony, on the other hand, leaves uncertainty in the reader's mind as to the attitude of the author and the attitude which he, as reader, ought to assume toward the events recounted. In regard to this definition, Pierre can be seen either as irony or as satire; if the much-debated pamphlet of Plotinus Plinlimmon is taken as the explicit moral of Pierre, the book is satire, and if it is taken as only one of multiple attitudes, the book is ironic. We shall consider the possibility that the correct view is to interpret a satiric structure incorporated in an overall ironic design. It is the purpose of this chapter to consider Pierre as a satirical romance with Plinlimmon's philosophy as central,

and to examine the passages and techniques that rightly belong to satire.

Satire, says Frye, requires two things: "one is wit or humor founded on fantasy or a sense of the grotesque or absurd, the other is an object of attack."[2] David Worchester, in The Art of Satire, has a similar statement:

> In the formation of any kind of satire there are two steps. The author first evolves a criticism of conduct--ordinarily human conduct, but occasionally divine. Then he contrives ways of making his readers comprehend and remember that criticism and adopt it as their own. Without style and literary form, his message would be incomprehensible; without wit and compression it would not be memorable; without high-mindedness it would not "come home to men's business and bosoms."[3]

Worchester incorporates irony in his discussion of satire, considering that an ironic view can

> become a habit of thought, an unseen governor in the choice and ordering of literary material. Finally, it may take on itself the form of the Adversary, or diabolos, and confronting God with self-comparisons put His justice and His mercy to question.[4]

Worchester's idea of irony is a sense that things are not as they should be, a sense which may "inspire a minute trope of rhetoric"[5] or extend, as it obviously does in Melville, to a cosmic scale. This is not to be confused with Frye's use of the term irony, having reference to the absence of an explicit standard for the guidance of the reader. Worchester's diabolos, who sounds much like Ahab, is motivated by a specific view of what ought to be. So is

Pierre, but the author and the narrator of his tale may not be. Thus the satiric is incorporated in the ironic.

Given a standard which he wishes to inculcate, the satirist must find a literary form for conveying his attack against deviations from that standard. He must have a fiction--a voyage, a social situation, something resembling plot. He will often employ within this plot an "image which, if effective, the reader cannot easily forget,"[6] a "central symbol of violence"[7] which in many works is cannibalism, dismemberment, or suicide. Satire deals with the corruption of an ideal, but one must have an eye for the objective results. The physical condition and ultimate fate of a satiric character indicate how he is to be regarded. Thus illnesses are important in satire. Furthermore, "the satirist who wishes to convey his indictment by a fictive rather than a discursive structure must (if his indictment is very severe) employ a physical encounter which ends in violence."[8]

In the context of these observations, Pierre's ocular disease constitutes a satiric indictment of him. Satiric diseases are usually highly appropriate, as venereal disease for the lustful. Pierre's being stricken in the organ of sight indicates that his perception of the world has been at fault. He must look out blearily between his lashes as a punishment for having such imperfect perception. His suicide, far from being tragic, is in this context a

proper end for one who has followed distorted standards. But the real "central symbol of violence" in the novel is the murder of Glen in cold blood. Commission of that inhuman act reveals the erroneous nature of Pierre's principles.

The satiric message in Pierre is embodied in a "manifest fiction," the story of an innocent boy from the country who goes to the city and finds that all is not as he expected. The violent actions and Pierre's illness occur within this plot, and the fiction constitutes the literary form required by Worchester's definition. Of the style we shall have more to say later, but Pierre obviously has certain stylistic devices which do not occur elsewhere in Melville and which can be interpreted as elements in a total satire. There are, in fact, a variety of distinct styles. So much for "style and literary form." No recent critic (earlier reviewers were shocked at the nonconformism of the apparent moral of the book) has denied the work's "high-mindedness" as it obviously deals with basic moral problems. "Compression" at first seems alien to Pierre, until one considers the actual simplicity of the narrative structure and the multiplicity of meaning that is packed into it. Of course, compression was never Melville's strong point, and this complexity of messages is one of the reasons for the failure of many critics to recognize the satirical aspect of the book.

But the real sticking point about Pierre as satire is the problem of "wit." Of course, the "Young America in Literature" chapters are humorous gems, but how much of the rest of the novel is in this vein? John D. Seelye[9], William Braswell[10], and Lawrance Thompson[11] present excellent arguments for considering the entire novel as satirically, "even facetiously"[12] conceived. The author's wit is revealed through such devices as parody, mock-heroic, Chaucerian irony, caricature, wordplay, humorous names, exaggeration--the humorist's entire repertory is at his command. As another scholar, Edward Rosenberry,[13] points out, Melville was known to his contemporaries as a humorist whose folksy vein resembled that which Mark Twain would later tap. Both Moby-Dick and The Confidence Man have strong elements of American folk humor. Pierre is the book between these two, and can be reasonably expected to contain some humor.

The remaining element of the definition is "an object of attack" in Frye's words, or a "criticism of conduct" in Worchester's. What, then, is attacked or criticized in Pierre? There are several answers to this question, as indeed there are for many satirical works. One scholar insists that "satire consists of an attack by means of a manifest fiction upon discernible historic particulars."[14] If we look in Pierre for an object with historic identity,

we arrive at the doors of the Christian church. Christian ideals are applied in society, and the idealist meets a violent end. In satiric terms, Christianity fails the pragmatic test; pragmatism and common sense are the basis for judgment in satire. The application of the term "enthusiast" to Pierre may be a direct reference to several revivalist Christian movements which took place around New England and Upstate New York during Melville's lifetime. The term appears to have been derogatory as applied to these sectarians. At any rate, the book clearly demonstrates the impracticality of any real attempt to apply New Testament ideals to daily conduct. Again, an overall ironic structure may render this message invalid, or at least only relative.

Other discussions of satire do not insist upon an historical entity as the object of the attack. The satirist may attack generalized human vices, which vary little from the time of Midas to that of Epicure Mammon, or from then to our own time. Avarice, gluttony, lechery, pride--these are human constants. Earlier satirists, both Roman and Elizabethan, tend to criticize such abstract vices, and Melville's affinity with the Elizabethans was, as we know, powerful. The character of Pierre could very well bear a Bunyanesque cognomen such as Pride. He places his private judgment above social norms, which automatically makes him a fair target for satire.

The object of attack, whether an historic entity or a generalized vice, is often exemplified by a "comic butt." This person must be in possession of his faculties--one cannot satirize a true madman--and have a valid moral sense. His error must be legitimately an error, not an inborn deficiency, which could not be held against him. "The commonest object of satire is a monomaniac,"[15] writes W.H. Auden. "Monomaniac" is, as we remember, Melville's own term for Ahab. It is applicable as well to Pierre, who pursues one type of virtue to the exclusion of all else. Balance is the essential aim of all comic art; the man who loses his balance must be laughed back to normal. Such is the basis of the comedies of Aristophanes and the "humor" plays of Ben Jonson; for this reason Jane Austen turns her ironic scalpel on the gothic novel, and Cervantes burlesques the chivalric romance. Pierre acts in a fashion which is totally against his self-interest in mundane terms, and he thereby unbalances his entire family circle. He does this willfully, being (at first) neither a madman nor a criminal. Later he becomes both as the result of his own choices. At that point the comic muse gives him up.

Satire is, almost by nature, digressive. Swift's Tale of A Tub actually makes a digression upon digressions. Even Candide, taut as it is, takes sly digs at the South American Jesuits and at others of Voltaire's bugbears.

Pierre, too, has secondary targets. The literary taste of the day is handled very roughly, not only in the "Young America in Literature" chapters but in parody throughout the novel. Lawyers are treated unfavorably, as are the impractical Apostles, some of whom closely resemble Transcendentalists. Again, their empty stomachs indicate that they are not on the right course. Urban society as a whole is depicted as corrupt and unfriendly, a theme which dates back to the Satyricon and reappears constantly in satires. The Christian religion receives the cannonade; but Melville, like a true satirist, fires smaller shot at other objects which have from time to time annoyed him.

Satire tends to express itself by certain literary techniques. Some of these are summed up by Alvin Kernan:

> The scene is always crowded, disorderly, grotesque; the satirist, in those satires where he appears, is always indignant, dedicated to truth, pessimistic and caught in a series of unpleasant contradictions incumbent on practicing his trade; the plot always takes the pattern of purpose followed by passion, but fails to develop beyond this point.[16]

Kernan's description of scene applies to Pierre in certain scenes, such as the watch-house riot and the Apostles'. The description of the satirist certainly applies to the narrator of Pierre. The plot of the novel conforms to the pattern of action ("purpose") followed by suffering ("passion"), but without the final step into knowledge that is

characteristic of tragedy.

Classical satire was written in a colloquial and linguistically inventive form of verse, spoken by a scornful, even bitter poet. It tried to "correct the vices and the follies of its time, and to give the rules of a happy and virtuous life."[17] The verse satires of Horace, Juvenal, Persius; Hall, Marston, Donne; Dryden, Pope, and Johnson belong to this class. But even in classical times there was another satiric form, the Menippean satire. Menippus wrote both prose and verse, but now we separate the "light verse" from prose tales like the Satyricon or The Golden Ass. Both works deal with the misadventures of a very fallible hero, an innocent or ignorant fellow who learns about the corruptions of civilized life. Both are in prose, are structured according to episodes, and have the quality of "attack" that is characteristic of satire. They are the ancestors of such satiric prose masterpieces as Gargantua and Pantagruel and Don Quixote, and in turn of Voltaire's Candide and Johnson's Rasselas. Frye, in his Anatomy of Criticism, uses the term anatomy to describe satiric prose works. I prefer to reserve that term to describe a treatise, which may be loosely organized, dealing with a stated topic. That is the sense it has in Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy and in Frye's own title. An anatomy in this sense is primarily a nonfiction form, though it may incorporate stories.

I prefer the term "Menippean satire" for such essentially fictive works as those discussed above.

There seem to be several subclasses of the satiric prose tale. In one direction there is the picaresque novel; it focuses on an antisocial hero, and discursively attacks various vices of his society. Similar to this is the satiric voyage--Gulliver's Travels, the search for the Bottle in Rabelais, the voyage around Mardi in Melville's earlier novel, the course of the raft in Huckleberry Finn. Although the organizing principle is a geographical voyage rather than a single character's encounters with his society, this type, like the picaresque novel, is discursive and has numerous objects of attack. A third type is what Frye calls the "satire on ideas" and Sheldon Sacks[18] calls an "apologue." Sacks attempts to distinguish between the type of wide-spectrum satire represented by Gulliver's Travels and the more limited and precise attack of Rasselas. The latter work belongs in a special class: "The informing principle of all such works is that each is organized as a fictional example of the truth of a formulable statement or closely related set of such statements."[19] Sacks does not specify the vehicle for the statement; the two best examples we have, however, are voyages made by ingenu characters, Candide and Rasselas.

If the Plinlimmon pamphlet is taken as the "formulable

statement" of Pierre, then Melville's novel is an apologue. There are, furthermore, numerous resemblances between Pierre and the tales of Voltaire and Johnson. The anti-romantic romance (Don Quixote, A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court) is a type similar to the apologue, as well. It differs from the more serious and philosophical apologue in that its object of attack is a literary mentality, not a philosophical system, and therefore it contains much parody. But it is more focused than either the picaresque novel or the satiric voyage; it demonstrates the gap between reality and a prominent fictional mode.[20] Pierre incorporates elements of the anti-romantic romance in its Quixotism and its literary parody.

The three works we want to look at most closely as analogues of Pierre are, then, Candide, Rasselas, and Don Quixote. Sealts (in Melville's Reading) has no listing for Candide at all. The entries for Rasselas (1869) and Don Quixote (1854) are later than the composition of Pierre. What is one to make of that? First of all, as this is not a source study, it is not necessary to prove that Melville read any specific work, but only that he produced something that resembles it. Nevertheless, we can create good probabilities that Melville was familiar with all three of these works. Sealts explains, in his introduction, that there are gaps in Melville's life that we can

never fill in. We do not know what was in his father's library. If it was anything like the libraries described in Redburn and Pierre, it must have been extensive. We do not know what Melville read on shipboard. Although Duyckinck kept a record of the books he lent, others of Melville's friends may have lent to him, or even read to him, other works of which we have no record. Perhaps the author's letters and diaries accidentally omit to mention certain puschases that he made from booksellers. Finally, it is possible that he became familiar with some works at second hand. One can know enough about a distinctive work like Don Quixote, Candide, or Rasselas to imitate it without reading it through, if the summary one has received is competent. This could explain Melville's purchases of Don Quixote and Rasselas at dates later than his apparent familiarity with them. He would certainly wish to become acquainted at first hand with something he had heard much about; he seems to have been an avid book collector who purchased works for his library even though he had read them before. He purchased Bayle, for example, years after borrowing the work from Duyckinck.

Critics have recognized echoes of both Cervantes and Voltaire in Melville prior to the composition of Pierre. In regard to Queequeg's idol, Lawrance Thompson remarks,

"Melville knew that Voltaire had some pertinent things to say on this human tendency toward making God in our own image."[21] The dominant model for Mardi's satiric voyage is clearly Rabelais, whom Melville had read around 1848; nevertheless, John Seelye[22] believes there is considerable influence from Cervantes in the Quixotism of Taji's behavior. Between the composition of Typee and the forging of Moby-Dick, "Lucian, Rabelais, Montaigne, Burton, and Bayle provided Melville with a library of Pyrrhonic writings"[23] to help him indulge his satiric tendencies. Bayle, especially, was a powerful influence. Melville once planned an entire summer of reading in Bayle's Historical and Critical Dictionary, which he had read in Duyckinck's library and then purchased for his own.

From Bayle Melville learned the history of philosophy up to the eighteenth century. Bayle was a great dialectician who used "self-protective stylistic equivocations"[24] to argue the issue of the origin of evil. Although he was tried for defending heresies, the ambiguity of his phrasing was such that he could claim to have defended orthodox doctrines. His method was to present a multiplicity of arguments on an equal basis, so that the orthodox interpretation (often shown to be self-contradictory) is seen as no more valid than the unorthodox. Most relevant for our purposes, Bayle was "the centre of the Manichean controversy in the

eighteenth century, as he had been ever since his Manichean articles had aroused a new interest in the whole problem of evil."[25] Millicent Bell and Lawrance Thompson[26] have shown the great extent of Moby-Dick's debt to Bayle. Reading them, one wonders whether the name "Pierre" is not a reference to Pierre Bayle. The method of multiple possibilities (ambiguities), the heavily Manichean flavor of the book as emphasized by the dual angels, and the use of the mouthpiece philosopher all suggest the influence of Bayle's techniques and ideas. The conceit of the chronometricals and horologicals also comes directly from the work of Bayle.[27]

Interest in Bayle and in the "Manichean illusion" should have led Melville to Voltaire, Bayle's disciple and the most powerful opponent of Leibniz's optimism in the eighteenth century. America was pretty much an extension of the Optimistic school, and Emersonian Transcendentalism, which is fundamentally Optimistic, reigned in Melville's America as the Leibnizian system had in Voltaire's France. It has become a critical commonplace that America's three great writers of the mid-nineteenth century, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville, were arguing for the "power of blackness" in the face of a society inclined to an opposite view. Both Melville and Voltaire showed early inclinations toward Optimism, but in the course of their lives they both turned against this philosophy. Candide was written at a low point in Voltaire's life--he was growing old, he had lost

Mme. du Chatelet, he had fought with Frederick. Specifically, the Lisbon earthquake and generally, his systematic studies of history made him conscious of a conflict between "the clocklike order of a rational, mechanical universe and the mad confusion of an illogical, capricious reality."[28] Similarly, Melville had experienced the financial failure of his serious fiction, had written what he considered potboilers in order to survive, and seemed in real doubt about his future as an artist. Even if we do not accept statements about a mental breakdown after Moby-Dick, it is apparent from numerous sources that Melville was depressed at this time.

Candide was not Voltaire's first blast at Optimism. His famous poem on the Lisbon Earthquake, though phrased far more mildly than Candide and, in some versions, allowing for hopes of divine Providence, evoked a storm of protest across Europe. One response was a letter from Rousseau which probably provoked Candide. Melville, too, had made a serious statement about the power of evil and the apparent rule of chaos in Moby-Dick, and even without waiting for publication he knew what the reviews would say. Pierre is his response to the criticisms of Moby-Dick, a response formulated even before many of the criticisms had been penned. Like his hero, Melville saw it all in advance:

> In that lonely little closet of his, Pierre foretasted all that this world hath either of praise or dispraise; and thus foretasting both goblets, anticipatingly hurled them both in its teeth.[29]

If he did not arrive at Voltaire's door by way of his interest in Bayle, Melville could well have been led there by his passion for Shakespeare. He read avidly all the Shakespeare criticism he could get. He may well have known that Voltaire was the center of a famous Shakespeare controversy. During a brief exile in England, Voltaire became familiar with Shakespeare and undertook to introduce his writings on the Continent. He did so, however, with serious censures on the English poet's failure to observe the classical unities. One reply to Voltaire's Shakespeare criticism is contained in the preface to Walpole's Castle of Otranto, a book which Melville owned.

There are some tantalizing clues in the text of Pierre which point to a study of French and possibly an acquaintance with some of Voltaire's works. There is one direct reference to the tart-tongued Frenchman in the letter from Pierre's publishers denouncing his book as "a blasphemous rhapsody, filched from the vile Atheists, Lucian and Voltaire."[30] Isabel gives a description of the French language:

> It was a bonny tongue; oh, seems to me so sparkling-gay and lightsome, just the tongue

> for a child like me, if the child had not been so sad always. It was pure children's language, Pierre; so twittering--such a chirp.[31]

A rather more detailed acquaintance with French is suggested by Melville's use, early in the book, of a rather unusual expression. In the description of the mysterious face, Pierre "knew not what" and in the same passage "could not tell what"[32] it evoked. Rare in English, this construction is common in French, as "je (il) ne sais quoi." A sign pointing to Voltaire is Melville's mention of "all-seducing Ninon" who could "unintendingly break scores of hearts at seventy."[33] Ninon de L'Enclos, a famous courtesan, was Voltaire's first patron.

The reference to the "Semiramian pride" of Mary Glendinning reminds us that Voltaire wrote a tragedy entitled Semiramis. The play is a Shakespearean imitation, a «tragedie dans le goût anglais[34]» which borrows from Hamlet the father's ghost, the mother-son attraction, and the bloody final scene. Semiramis, the Babylonian queen who helped murder her husband several years before the opening of the play, marries her son without knowing his identity. After they find out the truth, the son wants to avenge himself on the man who murdered his father, but accidentally stabs and kills his mother, a partner in the original crime. Recall the scene in which Mrs. Glendinning throws a fork into her own portrait and says that the wound is

inflicted by her son. Both the incest motif and the Hamlet analogues would make this play ideal for Melville's use in Pierre, if indeed a reference is intended. A further association is Melville's use of the word "magians." The wise men in the Babylonian court are called "les mages." Semiramis was published in English as early as 1760, and performed in English in 1776.[35] Possibly there was a copy of it in the library of trans-continental trader Allan Melville. The only work of Voltaire's we can trace to that library is the Histoire de Charles XII[36] but there may have been others.

For instance, there might have been a volume of Voltaire's Romances. What he called romances are actually very short philosophical tales (apologues). One such tale is "Memnon, the Philosopher." Memnon is a young man who decides one day that he will become "a perfect philosopher." He will avoid love by thinking of the decay of female beauty, foster temperance by recalling the effects of intemperance. He will never quarrel with his friends, and, being independently wealthy, never frequent the court. Needless to say, he soon breaks all of his resolutions and loses all his property, as well as one eye which is injured in a fight. His "good genius," a celestial being, consoles him in his ruin. Memnon will be happy again, the being tells him, though he will never recover his eye, but he must

never again try to be a perfect philosopher. "Is it, then, impossible?" said Memnon. "As impossible as to be perfectly wise, perfectly strong, perfectly powerful, perfectly happy," is the reply.[37]

Melville's alternate name for the Terror Stone, the Memnon Stone, certainly seems to refer to this story. Memnon's course is Pierre's, his fancied immunity to sin is as fragile as Pierre's, and the attempt at superlative virtue leads both young men into the worst evils they can conceive. The actual account that is given of the Memnon story in Pierre is, however, the traditional version and it echoes Bacon's account in The Wisedome of the Ancients (1619).

> The poets say, that Memnon was the sonne of Aurora, who (adorned with beautifull armour, and animated with popular applause) came to the Troiane warre: where (in a rash boldnes, hasting unto, and thirsting after glory) he enters into single combat with Achilles the valiantest of all the Grecians, by whose powerfull hand he was there slaine....
>
> This Fable may be applied to the unfortunate destinies of hopefull young men, who like the sonne of Aurora (puft up with the glittering shew of vanity and ostentation) attempt actions above their strength, and provoke and presse the most valiant Heroes to combat with them, so that (meeting with their overmatch) are vanquished and destroyed, whose death is often accompanied with much pitty and commiseration. For among all the disasters that can happen to mortals, there is none so lamentable and so powerful to move compassion as the flower of vertue cropt with too sudden a mischance....[38]

Compare Melville:

> For Memnon was that dewy royal boy, son of Aurora, and born King of Egypt, who, with enthusiastic rashness flinging himself on another's account into a rightful quarrel, fought hand to hand with his

> overmatch and met his boyish and most dolorous death beneath the walls of Troy....[39]

He retains the best strokes of Bacon's, such as the word "overmatch," but writes a modern, tight summary. Nor does he miss the Shakespearean misquotation (from Hamlet, appropriately); it is corrected in the next paragraph:

> Herein lies an unsummed world of grief. For in this plaintive fable we find embodied the Hamletism of the antique world; the Hamletism of three thousand years ago: "The flower of virtue cropped by a too rare mischance." And the English tragedy is but Egyptian Memnon, Montaignized and modernized; for being but a mortal man Shakespeare had his fathers too.[40]

Melville seems to be inviting us to discover his fathers in the Memnon passage, and we find them a very ill-matched pair. Melville seems to be balancing Voltaire's version of the tale with Bacon's. Later references to Bacon ("man's brain went into doting bondage, and bleached and beaten in Baconian fulling-mills, his four limbs lost their barbaric tan and beauty,"[41] "Bacon's brains were mere watch-maker's brains; but Christ was a chronometer"[42]) are quite unfavorable to the Englishman. For it is the complacency of self-assured reason that Melville wishes to attack; Bacon's systems of reasoning helped to begin that mentality, and the same complacency informed American transcendentalism. When, in Moby-Dick, Melville balanced Kant and Locke as two whales tied to the Pequod's sides, the balance was even. But when he balances confident rationalism with a Manichean insight, represented for him by Bacon and

Voltaire respectively, the scales are rigged in favor of Voltaire.

If Melville saw Voltaire as a Manichean, it would probably be on the basis of some knowledge of Candide, whether direct or secondary. Voltaire is not a systematic philosopher, and his life's output is often self-contradictory. But the Voltaire of Candide is the spokesman for the Diabolos, firing his system-shattering arrows of laughter. The plot of Candide is too well-known to require summary. We are immediately struck by the similarities in the childhoods of Pierre and Candide. Both are raised in rural mansions which dominate the local countryside. Saddle Meadows and Westphalia are described in Edenic terms. Both heroes are "expelled from the earthly paradise"[43] for alleged violations of the taboo forbidding marriage between upper and lower-class persons. Candide is an orphan, but it is assumed "that he was the son of My Lord the Baron's sister and of a good and honorable gentleman of the neighborhood whom that lady never would marry because he could prove only seventy-one quarterings and the rest of his genealogical tree had been lost by the injuries of time."[44] That sounds much like the objection to the marriage between Pierre's father and Isabel's mother: her family tree had been lost in the revolution, so the union was impossible. Isabel was the child of their amour.

Contact between the legitimate and the illegitimate children, which is slightly incestuous--Candide kissing his adopted sister, Isabel and Pierre "marrying"--results in expulsion from Paradise. The young people are then exposed to the evils of the outside world, but at the same time the hidden corruption of Paradise is exposed. Mrs. Glendinning is seen in a new, harsh light; and "all was consternation in the finest and most agreeable of all possible castles."[45] Candide is expelled by kicks; Pierre trips over his threshold and sprawls as if he, too, had been kicked.

From here, the two tales diverge as the authors follow their different satiric and parodic roads. The structure of Candide parodies a popular French mode, "the heroic-gallant novel of marvelous adventure and unrealistic courtship in lands equally foreign to author and reader."[46] Candide's mobility is remarkable, his ability to recover from serious injury nearly incredible. Voltaire, like Melville, had read and imitated Rabelais, and there are many adaptations of Rabelaisian techniques in Candide. There is also a probability of influence from Don Quixote, which Voltaire owned both in French and Spanish,[47] but this would be a general impulse rather than a scene-by-scene parallel. Pierre's essentially quixotic struggles are embodied by Melville in a novelistic form which

parodies the sentimental novel and which uses, as well, conventions from the novel of manners, the gothic romance, and the drama. In general outline, both plots are similar since they deal with a naive character's growing awareness of human evil. Voltaire externalizes the process by adding the two philosophers Pangloss and Martin. Pangloss is a disciple of Leibniz, Martin a confirmed Manichean whose life history closely resembles that of Pierre Bayle. Martin appears about halfway through the book, has Candide's ear to himself for a long while, and then becomes a foil for Pangloss as the characters are all reunited. The famous resolution to Candide, "We must cultivate our garden," is a balance between the two philosophies, though inclining to the skeptical and agnostic.

Melville introduces only one philosopher, and he never has any direct influence on Pierre; his advice is rather similar to Candide's ultimate resolution. Plotinus Plinlimmon's conceit of the chronometricals and horologicals is taken from Bayle (Martin). However, the pamphlet specifically states that there is an overall divine order, as Pangloss believes: "And yet it follows not from this that God's truth is one thing and man's truth another; but...by their very contradictions they are made to correspond."[48] As an apologue with the pamphlet as central, Pierre arrives about where Candide does. Both works are, nevertheless,

confusing. These comments about Candide apply equally well to Pierre:

> Its unremitting ambiguity leads inevitably to a puzzling clandestinity, and the reader, beset with difficulties in forming a well-considered opinion, settles for trite commonplaces.[49]

> Candide is thus in its inner substance not wholly optimistic, or pessimistic, or skeptical, or cynical; it is all of these things at the same time.[50]

> ...one never knows in reading Candide whether to laugh with Voltaire or at him, whether to laugh with the philosophers or at them, whether indeed to laugh with or at Providence; whether, in fact, to laugh at all.[51]

In other words, there is an overlying irony in both works which may invalidate the philosophical statement of the apologue. The author's meaning is encased in ambiguities. That is not the case with Rasselas, another possible model.

The central proposition in Rasselas is stated early in the book: "Human life is every where a state in which much is to be endured, and little to be enjoyed."[52] Rasselas is an Abyssinian prince raised in strict seclusion in the "Happy Valley," an elaborate society set in a beautiful valley surrounded by precipitous mountains. Saddle Meadows is geographically far more like this valley than it is like Westphalia. We soon learn, however, that this too is no true Eden. All the nobles, servants, and artisans wish they could return to the outer world, a course forbidden by law and military force alike. Rasselas finally

escapes from Eden with his sister and her attendant (cf. Isabel and Delly). The party is guided by an experienced older man named Imlac. This figure, like Pangloss, is absent from Pierre. They travel to a large metropolis where the younger members begin a systematic investigation into the happiness of men in various social classes and occupations. They soon discover that there is unhappiness among courtiers as well as merchants, hermits as well as socialites; that single people as well as married people can be miserable; and that even the pursuit of knowledge can lead to grief, since it separates the seeker from healthful social intercourse. Every person imagines that he could be happier in another life-style; it is this universal human error that has led the party out of the Happy Valley in the first place. In the end, they decide to return there.

The structure of Rasselas is in two parts--the Happy Valley scenes and the outside world scenes.[53] The same structure is observable in Pierre. Although there is some discussion of the soul and the nature of divinity, the book as a whole impresses one as more Stoical than Christian. There is none of the systematic explanation of evil that so disgusted Melville, and much emphasis on the universal presence of human suffering. It is a book whose premises Melville could readily grant, and which would have little to offend him.

Johnsonian wit tends to be rather elephantine, but there are some excellent flashes of wit in regard to Rasselas' procrastination after determining to escape. Rasselas "passed four months in resolving to lose no more time in idle resolves."[54] He is also mocked for his elaborate rhetorical lamentations--he received "some solace of the miseries of life from consciousness of the delicacy with which he felt, and the eloquence with which he bewailed them."[55] His imaginary projects always concern "the relief of distress, the detection of fraud, the defeat of oppression, and the diffusion of happiness."[56] Pierre is mildly ridiculous in exactly the same ways--his self-pitying eloquence, his delay (echoes of Hamlet, as Melville makes sure we know), and especially his vision of himself as a universal righter of wrongs. All of these things in both Rasselas and Pierre are aspects of innocence, not strictly blameable; that ignorance, however, is the basis for ingenu satire and is an ancient and well-established object of ridicule.

Don Quixote is related to this discussion because it is the ultimate example of a satirical prose work which mocks a popular type of literature. Cervantes exploded the chivalric romance by parodying it. The parody in Candide may be, as we have noted, influenced by Cervantes. The parody in Pierre, aside from its greater subtlety, is

often unrecognized because its object is the sentimental novel, a type which many critics specializing in American fiction of the nineteenth century probably do not read.

> In general, the sentimental novel opposes intuition to rationality; disjuncture, episode, and effusion to continuity and plot; artlessness and sincerity to art and literary calculation; and emotional to verbal communication.[57]

The sentimental novel flourished in Europe at about the same time as the gothic romance, and similarly found its American market somewhat later. This type of fiction delights in stories of ruined innocence, and the characters who suffer are generally very young. The pose of artlessness gave the author plenty of room to disguise a bad prose style; indeed, it tended to encourage effusions as the apparent overflow of spontaneous emotion. Moralizing is commonly found in such books. The author often addresses the reader directly. Authors of sentimental novels were often women, and their readers appear to have been primarily women. Melville's masculine sensibilities would have very likely been disturbed at the style of these books in the hands of his novel-reading sisters. He would likely have resented, as well, their acceptance by the reviewers at the expense of the type of fiction he liked to write. Thus the impulse to parody probably arose.

Parody is primarily visible in the book's prose style. This brings us to the issue of the "bad prose" of

Pierre, something every critic must confront in dealing with the novel. Unless he ignores his innate taste and asserts that it is not bad, the critic must assume one of two possible positions: either it is parody, or Melville was losing his grip on language, forgetting the superb control and poetic mastery he had learned and employed for Moby-Dick. The latter explanation ties in with a belief that Melville was in a state of pathological depression during the composition of Pierre. This study begins with the premise that the novel is an intentional, controlled creation, and therefore we shall examine these passages for parodic content. Finding that, we shall reconfirm our initial premise.

Lawrance Thompson is one critic who has discussed the book in a satiric context. Pierre is, he says, "a satirical novel in which an innocent and idealistic young man would be frustrated and destroyed by the combined malice of Heaven and Earth."[58] William Braswell has published several articles pointing out satirical passages in the novel. The detailed discussion of Pierre's ancestry and its comparison of his lineage with European bloodlines, which we discussed in the context of the novel of manners, may well be mock-heroic. (Noble birth is never a guarantee of virtue in the sentimental novel, as many heroines are ruined by young noblemen.) There are obvious Platonic overtones in Pierre's response to Lucy's "heavenly beauty." He worships her, in fact. This is exactly the relationship

between the knight and his lady that Cervantes mocked with Quixote and Dulcinea, and which Mark Twain would later mock with the Yankee and Sandy; and medieval Platonism is the basis for all later sentimentalizing of romantic love. The initial description of Lucy is the "inventory" familiar to chivalric legend, but so exaggerated as to be certainly parody:

> Her cheeks were tinted with the most delicate white and red, the white predominating. Her eyes some god brought down from heaven; her hair was Danae's spangled with Jove's shower; her teeth were dived for in the Persian Sea.[59]

At last this becomes too much even for Melville:

> Never shall I get down the vile inventory! How, if with paper and with pencil I went out into the starry night to inventorize the heavens? Who shall tell stars as teaspoons? Who shall put down the charms of Lucy Tartan on paper?[60]

The Renaissance Platonists placed much importance upon the eyes, which darted Cupid's arrows. Compare Melville:

> ...Love's eyes are holy things; therein the mysteries of life are lodged; looking in each other's eyes, lovers see the ultimate secret of the worlds; and with thrills eternally untranslatable, feel that love is god of all. Man or woman who has never loved, nor once looked deep down into their own lover's eyes, they know not the sweetest and the loftiest religion of this earth. Love is both the Creator's and Savior's gospel to mankind; a volume bound in rose-leaves, clasped with violets, and by the beaks of humming-birds printed with peach-juice on the leaves of lilies.[61]

For me, at least, the peach-juice stains strike a jarring note, puncturing the rhapsody by recalling an image of young children (the author's?) with sticky mouths and fingers.

At other times in the early chapters, the narrator makes statements which contradict what Melville appears to have believed, as far as we can judge the man from his other works.

> ...We lived before, and shall live again; and as we hope for a fairer world than this to come; so we came from one less fine. From each successive world, the demon Principle is more and more dislodged; he is the accursed clog from chaos, and thither, by every new translation, we drive him further and further back again. Hosannahs to this world! so beautiful itself, and the vestibule to more. Out of some past Egypt, we have come to this new Canaan; and from this new Canaan, we press on to some Circassia.[62]

In its blend of religious optimism and patriotism (America was often called the New Canaan), this sounds like the utterances of the most saccharine element of what R.W.B. Lewis[63] calls "the party of Hope," the American Optimists. It certainly does not sound like the author of Moby-Dick. Irony is indicated. At the beginning, Pierre and Lucy, and Pierre and his mother, have a concept of love in which there are no secrets--"only in unbounded confidence and interchangings of all subtlest secrets, can love possibly endure."[64] This impossible romantic ideal of a perfect human communion is shattered by the apparition of Isabel. After that, Pierre cannot be totally open with either

Lucy or his mother.

The first portion of the novel, with its Platonism, chivalry, perfect love, and rhapsodic optimism, to say nothing of its strong patriotism, resembles "a compendium of all the diseases that had been accumulating for sixty years on the body of American popular fiction."[65] Because so many of these novels are stylistically horrible, Pierre is often not recognized as parody--it is impossible to write worse than the worst! Melville tries, however, with his numerous coinages, long sentences, extravagant tropes, and frequent use of thee and thou without even any Quaker characters as pretexts. The latter portion of the novel becomes less optimistic and takes on overtones of novels like Goethe's Werther, an updated version of the sentimental novel. Pierre "follows to the letter the formula prescribed by Susanna Rowson in 1794: 'a sufficient quantity of sighs, tears, swooning hysterics, and all the moving expressions of heart-rending woe,...a duel, and, if convenient, a suicide!'"[66] The significant quotation Nemo contra Deum nisi Deus ipse is taken from Goethe's autobiography, which Melville read in 1849. Although parody is less obvious in the latter portion of the book, the greatest improbabilities--Lucy's deathlike faint, Pierre's sudden decision to become a murderer, etc.--can be explained as parodic.

The satiric outlook explains another puzzling aspect

of Pierre, that of narrative point of view. The narrator is often inconsistent, contradicting what he has said earlier. The facts he relates are reliable, but his philosophizing on them is not. Pierre is Melville's first use of the omniscient narrator, a technique he subsequently used in all his works of importance. Why did he abandon his previously successful formula of first-person narration? One possibility is that he did so in order to achieve satiric distance. As several critics have noticed, Pierre is mocked by his narrator when he is blissfully ignorant, then treated with elaborate sympathy when he is miserable. The narrator of the novel is conceived with Chaucerian irony; he echoes the opinions of his characters, agrees with their ideas, but relies on subtle devices of narrative to point out their errors.

The treatment of Reverend Falsgrave is vintage Chaucer.[67] His stoutness, the hint of worldliness and especially gluttony (much is made of his enjoyment of the Glendinning breakfast table) and his refusal to do manual labor or undertake the more unpleasant tasks of dealing with the poor and humble, are traits Falsgrave shares with the monk in Chaucer's prelude. His overly delicate manners resemble those of Chaucer's prioress. Asked to break bread, "Mr. Falsgrave acquitted himself on this occasion, in a manner that beheld of old by Leonardo, might have

given that artist no despicable hint touching his celestial painting."[68] Compare Chaucer's prioress:

> At mete wel ytaught was she with alle:
> She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,
> Ne wette hir fyngres in hir sauce depe;
> Wel koude she carie a morsel and wel kepe
> That no drope ne fille upon hir brest.
> In curteisie was set ful muchel hir lest.
> .....
> And sikerly she was of greet desport,
> And ful pleasaunt, and amyable of port,
> And peyned hire to countrefete cheere
> Of court, and to ben estatlich of manere,
> And to ben holden digne of reverence.[69]

Both the monk and the prioress wear jewelry in violation of their vows of poverty; the articles themselves suggest hypocrisy in their wearers, hinting at secular amours in violation of the vow of chastity. The prioress wears a bracelet of beads, from which hangs a gold brooch bearing "a crowned A/ And after Amor vincit omnia." The monk's adornment is also a brooch, a "ful curious pyn/ a love-knott in the gretter ende ther was." After Falsgrave refuses to give a clear pronouncement as to the Christian doctrine regarding Delly,

> The surplice-like napkin dropped from the clergyman's bosom, showing a minute but exquisitely cut cameo brooch, representing the allegorical union of the serpent and the dove. It had been the gift of an appreciative friend.[70]

When Pierre wakes up Falsgrave in the middle of the night and finds him "invested in his very becoming student's wrapper of Scotch plaid," he gets no comfort from the

too-worldly minister. The narrator comments that Pierre has "made war upon that really amiable and estimable person."[71] Here is Melville's equivalent of that classic statement of Chaucerian irony, "and I seyde his opinion was good," made in regard to the monk's unorthodoxy. Despite his Bunyanesque name, Falsgrave is obviously criticized in the same way and for the same failings as Chaucer's clergy. The conduct of Christ is the implied standard by which all of them are judged. But it goes further in Melville's novel, for Falsgrave's inability to live by his professed creed is evidence for the nonfeasibility of Christianity.

On a larger scale, the same sort of narrative treatment is given to Pierre himself. The narrator rhapsodizes about love, or rails against the cruelty of the universe, in accordance with Pierre's changing attitudes. The philosophizing passages are extensions of Pierre's thought and need not represent the narrator's view at all. Satire is a form which makes constant use of the persona. The satirist seldom means what he literally says. For meaning, we must look at the other aspects of the narrative, as we do in Chaucer. We then arrive at the conclusion that Pierre is mocked; his illness, his violence to himself and others, his failure to get along in the pragmatic world are, in satiric terms, indictments.

But if Pierre is mistaken, what then is right? What is the moral norm, the standard, the central statement made by the novel as satire? It is the pamphlet of Plotinus Plinlimmon. The message of this pamphlet is that divine law (the New Testament) is impracticable in the phenomenal world, and that men must live by their own consciences rather than by imitation of Christ.

> In short, this chronometrical and horological conceit, in sum, seems to teach this:--that in things terrestrial (horological) a man must not be governed by ideas celestial (chronometrical); that certain minor self-renunciations in this life his own mere instinct for his own every-day general well-being will teach him to make, but he must by no means make a complete unconditional sacrifice of himself in behalf of any other being, or any cause, or any conceit;...
>
> A virtuous expediency, then, seems the highest desirable or attainable earthly excellence for the mass of men, and is the only earthly excellence that their Creator intended for them.[72]

This doctrine by no means sanctions criminal actions, since as Plinlimmon explains, such actions are contrary to the horologue. An ideal society depends on each person's following his own self-interest.

That is exactly the doctrine elucidated by Spinoza in his Ethics. Moby-Dick contains the Spinozan suspicion that there is no "first cause."[73] Charlie Millthorpe writes for an obscure publication called "The Spinozaist," and he is one of Plinlimmon's admirers. In his Ethics,

Spinoza developed an entire system of morality based on human, not divine, principles:

> The more each person strives and is able to seek his own profit, that is to say, to preserve his being, the more virtue does he possess...
>
> No one endeavors to preserve his own being for the sake of another object....
>
> To act absolutely in conformity with virtue is nothing but acting according to the laws of our own proper nature.[74]

This apparently selfish behavior will nevertheless lead to social good, since the cooperation of others is necessary in order for a man to be happy. All men who are governed by reason will therefore desire others to enjoy the goods which they enjoy. If Pierre had acted in accord with reason in this Spinozan sense, he could have done good for Isabel (albeit secretly), married Lucy, and been happy as well as good. All of his problems result from his attempts at chronometrical conduct. As an apologue based on the pamphlet, Pierre is quite consistent. The explicit moral of the book is very similar to that of Candide--cultivate your own garden, do not seek to do the impossible.

There are several other satiric and comic devices in the book, some of which are so obvious that they scarcely need mentioning. The comic names of Pierre's publishers and admirers, Melville's prose Dunciad with its attacks on critics and successful literary hacks, the caricature

of the Apostles and the ridicule of their "flesh-brush philosophy," the dialogue of Millthorpe--all are better appreciated if they are seen as elements of a satiric work, not simply as scattered essays of wit. Even the Enceladus motif carries, as well as Shelleyan Prometheanism, overtones of Rabelais. Gargantua was a descendant of the Titans.

We have established that Melville definitely knew several satirical works (the classical satirists, Rabelais), had a thorough acquaintance with the narrative ambiguity of Bayle, and probably knew Chaucer, Voltaire, Johnson, and Cervantes, before he wrote Pierre. He had already exercised his satirical powers in Mardi, but failed through lack of concentration and compression. He would not make that mistake again. Pierre, his next attempt in the satiric mode, fits that mode both by definition and by its similarities to other works which are undoubtedly satiric; it fits especially into the genre we defined as the apologue. Considering Pierre as satire solves many critical perplexities; it explains the "bad prose" in certain sections, clarifies the position of the narrator, and integrates the obviously comic elements into the total structure. But "satire" is still not the last word on Pierre. The carefully developed ideology of the pamphlet is sometimes undermined.

The character of Plinlimmon himself is far from

attractive, though his doctrines are apparently upheld. His "non-benevolence" has a chilling effect on Pierre. Furthermore, he is hypocritical. His followers live austerely, but he accepts presents of food and drink, claiming that he, like Mohammed, has a special dispensation. He refuses books. These characteristics render him extremely enigmatic. The love of food and drink is apparently a good trait, as it is in Rabelais. Pierre and the Apostles suffer from their poor diets, for the body needs "champagne and oysters." But it is difficult to imagine such a bibliophile as Melville sanctioning an anti-intellectualism as complete as Plinlimmon's, and it is difficult to believe that anyone so devoid of brotherly love can be, for Melville, entirely right.

The pamphlet as Spinozan ethic is undercut by an attack on Spinoza, made in a soliloquy by Pierre's fictitious hero Vivia:

> "Away, ye chattering apes of a sophomorean Spinoza and Plato, who once didst all but delude me that the night was day, and pain only a tickle. Explain this darkness, exorcise this devil ye can not. Tell me not, thou inconceivable coxcomb of a Goethe, that the universe can not spare thee and thy immortality, so long as--like a hired waiter--thou makest thyself 'generally useful'"[75]

The Goethe reference is again to the Autobiography. We have already shown how Platonism is mocked; Neoplatonism is recalled and mocked in the person of Plotinus. There

is a previous passage which connects three philosophers: "Plato, Spinoza, and Goethe, and many more belong to this guild of self-imposters"[76] who claim to have discovered meaning in the universe. Very likely Melville meant the Ethics to be recognized in the pamphlet, but no critic seems to have made the connection. Bacon, though omitted from these two passages, is also attacked in the novel.

At first glance, Plato, Bacon, Spinoza, and Goethe have little in common--only that all were systematizers; and the apologue, as exemplified by Candide and Rasselas, is an antisystematic genre. It attacks existing philosophies but does not replace them with new ones. The pamphlet is useful as an illustration of how the world goes; but as the narrator himself says, it "seems more the excellently illustrated restatement of a problem, than the solution of the problem itself."[77] If one follows Plinlimmon, one will get along in the world but never know why there is a discrepancy between ideals and conduct. The existence of evil is not explained; the pasteboard mask remains intact.

Above the apologue--above the careful illustration of the impracticability of Christian ethics, the literary parody, the digs at critics, Transcendentalists, and other satirical targets--there remains an overarching irony. We do not know how to regard the pamphlet because the

author's tone is not specific. Is Vivia, the literary creation of Melville's literary creation, correct in condemning all systems? Is Pierre correct in condemning all optimism? Since the narrator agrees with Pierre in hope and adversity alike, what is his true position? As the outermost of these Chinese boxes, we have Melville himself, nearly inaccessible except by means of his other works and his known opinions. A more ambiguous framework could hardly be devised.

NOTES

[1]Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton, N.Y.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957), p. 223.

[2]Ibid., p. 224.

[3]David Worchester, The Art of Satire (New York: Russel and Russel, 1960), p. 13.

[4]Ibid., p. 75.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ronald Paulson, "The Fictions of Satire," in Ronald Paulson, ed., Satire: Modern Essays in Criticism (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971), p. 340.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Ibid., p. 341.

[9]John D. Seelye, Melville: The Ironic Diagram (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1970).

[10]William Braswell, "The Early Love Scenes in Melville's Pierre," American Literature, 22 (1950), 283-9; and also his article "The Satirical Temper of Melville's Pierre," American Literature, 7 (1936), 424-438.

[11]Lawrance Thompson, Melville's Quarrel with God (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1952).

[12]Seelye, p. 77.

[13]Edward H. Rosenberry, Melville and the Comic Spirit (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1965).

[14]Edward W. Rosenheim, Jr., "The Satiric Spectrum," in Paulson, ed., Satire, p. 323.

[15]W.H. Auden, "The Object of Satire," in Satire, p. 273.

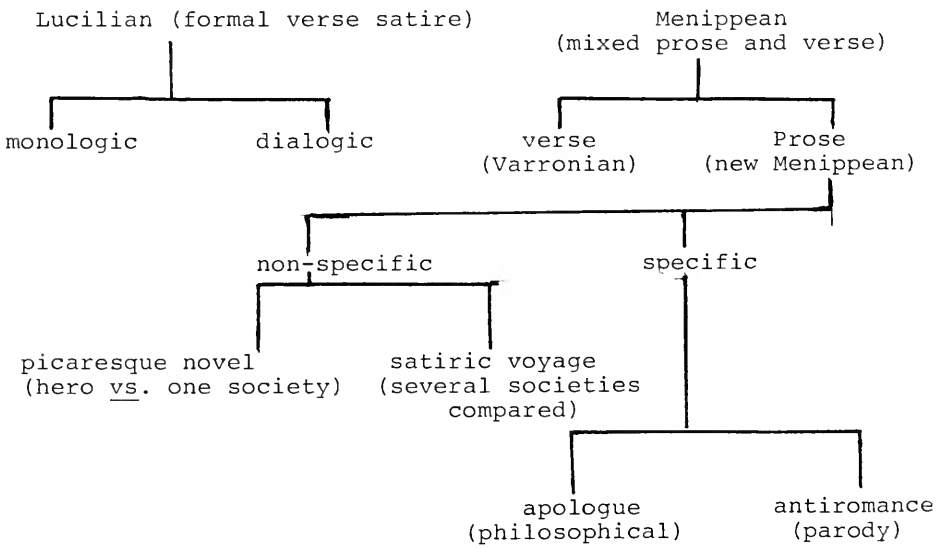
[16]Alvin Kernan, "A Theory of Satire," in Satire, p. 273.

[17]Patricia Meyer Spacks, "Some Reflections of Satire," in Satire, p. 360.

[18]Sheldon Sacks, "From: Toward a Grammar of the Types of Fiction," in Satire, p. 330.

[19]Ibid., p. 331.

[20]In this system of classification, I have not, of course, exhaustively catalogued all works of satire, as I am interested only in defining Pierre. This should therefore be viewed as an outline rather than a complete system. It is based on the system proposed in John M. Aden's article, "Towards a Uniform Satiric Terminology," Satire Newsletter, 1 (1964), 30-32, but expands the prose Menippean arm for the purposes of this study.



[21]Thompson, Melville's Quarrel, p. 165.

[22]Seelye, Ironic Diagram.

[23]Ibid., p. 2.

[24]Thompson, p. 26.

[25]H.T. Mason, Pierre Bayle and Voltaire (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963), p. 71.

[26]Millicent Bell, "Pierre Bayle and Moby-Dick," PMLA, 66 (1951), 626-648, and the opening chapters of Thompson's Melville's Quarrel with God.

[27]Thompson, p. 272.

[28]William F. Bottiglia, "Candide's Garden," PMLA, 66 (1951), 718.

[29]Pierre, p. 399.

[30]Ibid., p. 420.

[31]Ibid., p. 138.

[32]Ibid., pp. 61-62.

[33]Ibid., p. 165.

[34]Francois Marie Arout de Voltaire, Semiramis, ed. Jean Jacques Olivier (Paris: Librairie Droz, 1946), p. x ("tragedy in the English taste").

[35]Harold L. Bruce, "Voltaire on the English Stage," University of California Publications in Modern Philology, 3 (1918), 1-151.

[36]Sealts, Melville's Reading.

[37]Francois Marie Arout de Voltaire, "Memmon the Philosopher" in The Works of Voltaire, IV (New York: E.R. DuMont, 1901), 33-41.

[38]Francis Bacon, The Wisedome of the Ancients (New York: Da Capo Press, 1968), no. 14, "Memnon, or a youth too forward."

[39]Pierre, p. 159.

[40]Ibid.

[41]Ibid., p. 232.

[42]Ibid., p. 248.

[43]Francois de Voltaire, Candide, in Milton Foster, ed., Voltaire's Candide and the Critics (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1962), p. 3.

[44]Ibid., p. 1.

[45]Ibid., p. 3.

[46]George P. Havens, "The Nature Doctrine of Voltaire," in Candide and Critics, p. 87.

[47]Ibid.

[48]Pierre, p. 249.

[49]Ira O. Wade, "Voltaire and Candide," in Candide and Critics, p. 129.

[50]Ibid., p. 131.

[51]Ibid., p. 133.

[52]Samuel Johnson, Rasselas, Poems, and Selected Prose, ed. Bertrand H. Bronson (Atlanta: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1958), p. 531.

[53]Gwin J. Kolb, "The Structure of Rasselas," PMLA, 66 (1951), 698-717.

[54]Rasselas, p. 514.

[55]Ibid., p. 510.

[56]Ibid., p. 513.

[57]Leo Braudy, "The Form of the Sentimental Novel," Novel, 7 (1963), 12.

[58]Thompson, p. 247.

[59]Pierre, p. 26.

[60]Ibid., p. 28.

[61]Ibid., p. 38.

[62]Ibid., p. 37.

[63]R.W.B. Lewis, The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1971).

[64]*Pierre*, p. 42

[65]Rosenberry, p. 159.

[66]as quoted by Rosenberry, p. 159.

[67]"In his happier moments, as the present, his face was radiant with a courtly, but mild benevolence; his person was nobly robust and dignified; while the remarkable smallness of his feet, and the almost infantile delicacy, and vivid whiteness and purity of his hands, strikingly contrasted with his fine girth and stature." (*Pierre*, p. 115) Compare Falsgrave to Chaucer's monk, who

> "...leet olde thynges pace
> And heeld after the newe world the space
> Now certeinly he was a fair prelaat;
> He was nat pale as a forpyned goost
> .....
> What sholde he studie and make hymselven wood
> Upon a book in cloystre alway to poure
> Or swynken with his handes, and laboure
> .....
> He was a lord ful fat and in good poynt." (General Prologue to *Canterbury Tales*, ed. F.N. Robinson, Cambridge edition, [Boston: Houghton Miflin, 1957], p. 19).

[68]*Pierre*, p. 115.

[69]Chaucer, p. 18.

[70]*Pierre*, pp. 120-121.

[71]*Ibid.*, p. 195.

[72]*Ibid.*, pp. 251-252.

[73]William Braswell, *Melville's Religious Thought* (Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 1943), p. 62.

[74]Benedictus de Spinoza, *The Philosophy of Spinoza* (New York: Random House, 1927), pp. 268-270.

[75]*Pierre*, p. 356.

[76]*Ibid.*, p. 244.

[77]*Ibid.*, p. 246.

CHAPTER 4

PIERRE AS ELIZABETHAN TRAGEDY

Melville's enthusiasm for Elizabethan-Jacobean drama and his idolatry of Shakespeare are well-documented. The affinity between mid-nineteenth century America and Renaissance England lay, as F.O. Matthiessen explains in his American Renaissance,[1] in common experiences of exploration and discovery in many fields, leading to an expanded view of human possibilities. Melville's affinity with the literature of the English Renaissance was even closer and more personal than that of his American contemporaries. Raymond G. Hughes[2] was one of the first critics to explore in depth the debt which Moby-Dick owes to Shakespearean language and dramatic structure; but even Melville's contemporaries had noted in their reviews a general impression of borrowings from early dramatists. One of Matthiessen's chapters on Moby-Dick is entitled "The Revenger's Tragedy" and contains a detailed exposition of the elements in the book taken from Renaissance drama. The dominant parallel cited by Matthiessen and numerous other critics is that of Ahab and Pip as Lear and the Fool. There has, however, been considerable debate in print over the question

of Ahab's right to the title of tragic hero, since he does not admit error and is not reconciled to his universe.

The Renaissance dramatic influence in Pierre has also received considerable attention. Melville himself invites us to make the comparison with Hamlet. Matthiessen accepts the invitation, and entitles a chapter on Pierre "An American Hamlet." As in the case of Moby-Dick, however, there are recognizable parallels from more than one play. Elinor Yaggy[3] makes a good case for the influence of Romeo and Juliet, and Raymond Long[4] adds Macbeth as third in order of importance as a recognizable influence. These tabulations are made on the basis of verbal parallels and borrowed characters. More important for our purposes, however, is that the overall structure of the novel does conform to a considerable degree to the structure of Elizabethan-Jacobean tragedy as defined by eminent critics. Mattiessen calls Pierre "one of the few major efforts of that period to produce a tragedy"[5]; and Melville's models for tragedy were English Renaissance models, not classical Greek ones.

A.C. Bradley's Shakespearean Tragedy[6] is a definitive study of the form. Although Kenneth Muir was correct in saying, "There is no such thing as Shakespearean Tragedy; there are only Shakespearean tragedies,"[7] it is possible for Bradley to make useful generalizations without doing

violence to any single play. Shakespeare's tragedies are concerned primarily with a single person (hero) except for the "lover" plays, Romeo and Juliet and Antony and Cleopatra. The plays, continues Bradley, depict the troubles and suffering of the hero up to his death. These sufferings are unexpected and contrast vividly with previous happiness or glory. The hero is a man of "high degree," whose fate affects a whole nation or empire. The calamities proceed from human actions, expecially the hero's. Character is the central factor in determining these actions. The use of abnormal mental states, supernatural forces, and accident is limited so that it does not destroy "the causal connection of character, deed, and catastrophe."[8] There is both inward and outward conflict involving the hero. The hero's nature is always exceptional, distinguished by strength or genius, but it is also one-sided. The hero has "a fatal tendency to identify the whole being with one interest, object, passion, or habit of mind. This, it would seem, is, for Shakespeare, the fundamental tragic trait."[9] This point is vitally important with reference to Melville. Because of the conjunction of his singular character with certain peculiar circumstances, Pierre makes his fatal error. Even in his fall, however, the Shakespearean and Melvillian hero exhibits the greatness of the human

spirit.

So far these characteristics of Shakespearean tragedy seem to fit both Moby-Dick and Pierre, with the exception of the "high degree" stipulation. This, of course, has always been the sticking point for American tragedy, and even Arthur Miller's successful experiments have not overcome the problem. Melville's strategy is to build up the stature of his American heroes as far as he can. Ahab is given the name of a "crowned king," called a "lord of Leviathans," and described in almost gigantic terms physically. There is a consistent attempt to glorify Pierre by references to his distinguished ancestry, including a disparagement of the bloodlines of the English nobility. Pierre's physical beauty is also dwelt upon, as is his position of economic and cultural superiority to the tenants who live in his domain. He is given the status of a prince, though his kingdom is smaller than even Denmark. But for both Ahab and Pierre, Melville's most effective status-giving device is the language they speak in soliloquy. This of course is also Shakespeare's most powerful technique. The soliloquies of Hamlet, of Macbeth, of Richard III--these give us a conception of a nobility of character which does not and cannot come out in dialogue or action. It is no accident that the soliloquies of Ahab and Pierre are in

Elizabethan English. Nor is it, as Matthiessen and some others seem to think, a nearly unconscious imitation on Melville's part. He deliberately wrote these soliloquies to sound like Shakespeare's because that was the language which his nineteenth-century audience was accustomed to hear spoken by tragic heroes. In an age which worshipped Shakespeare and often performed his plays, Melville capitalized on Shakespearean associations to elevate the stature of his heroes. In the process he wrote some lines that might well have passed muster in the Globe.

Shakespearean tragedy, as well as classical tragedy, has exposition, conflict, and catastrophe. Somewhere near the middle of the play, force "A", which has been dominant, loses ground to force "B", which takes over and brings about the catastrophe. In Hamlet, this climax comes when the success of "The Mousetrap" reveals that Hamlet is now a force able to challenge Claudius. But this progress is not constant, nor is tension kept always high. There are several kinds of scenes, ranging from broad comedy to passive exchanges of dialogue, which separate the high dramatic moments. Melville achieves something of this effect in novelistic form by using the philosophical digression, the straight narrative, dialogue, and soliloquy--the first two with modulations of narrative tone, the latter two varied

according to the speakers, who range from comic caricatures to Pierre himself.

Bradley uses a three-part structural model, but the First Folio divides Shakespeare's plays into five acts. There is some question as to the validity of the act divisions, since there was no curtain in the playhouse and scenes were presented in continuity. But Ruth Nevo[10] argues that the five-act structure is integral, derived primarily from the plays of Seneca and the criticism of Terence, both of which were known to every Renaissance schoolboy. She explains the act divisions of the First Folio as follows:

> Act I, "predicament"--An impossible choice is introduced.
> Act II, "psychomachia"--The dilemma is clearly framed for the hero.
> Act III, "peripeteia"--There is a complete reversal of the hero's fortunes.
> Act IV, "irony"--The hero despairs.
> Act V, "catastrophe"--The ultimate consequences are played out.

What is important for our purposes is that Melville owned an edition of Shakespeare based on the First Folio, and he would be familiar with the five-act structure; indeed, he would probably regard it as normal and integral. It is not surprising, then, that Melville's "American Hamlet" divides easily into five parts. The divisions are not quite equal among the twenty-six books, but they are nearly

so. The third and fourth acts are slightly longer, as they often are in Shakespeare, and the catastrophe section is slightly shorter.

Act I comprises Books I-V, ending with "Misgivings and Preparatives." This section is almost entirely expository; the "predicament" is introduced but it is still theoretical, for Pierre has not yet met Isabel nor done anything about her. Act II, the "psychomachia," brings home his dilemma in the person of Isabel. He sees her twice, broods after each interview, and finally makes his "Unprecedented Final Resolution," Book X. In Act III, the "peripeteia," he begins as a prince in the country and ends as a homeless outcast in the city. The influence of Mrs. Glendinning's world is overthrown by Isabel's presence. This section is primarily action, from Book XI, "He Crosses the Rubicon," to Book XVI, "First Night of Their Arrival in the City." But it also contains the pamphlet, which Melville thought important enough to place in his structural apex (Book XIV of 26). Act IV, "irony," has comparatively little action. Pierre realizes the hopelessness of his position and the narrator reinforces this despair by his comments on the sad state of literature and the impossibility of succeeding as a serious artist. Books XVII to XXII are practically an interlude in the action. Things pick up again with Book XXIII, Lucy's arrival,

which begins the "catastrophe" of Act V. From here on, Melville drops his narrative digressions and deals with his characters directly, finally dispensing with them all in a few pages. Not only its mechanical structure but even its careful variations of pace mark Pierre as a narrative adaptation of the five-act dramatic form.

From Shakespeare Melville learned the use of the significant subplot which comments either directly or ironically upon the main action. This device existed even in Marlowe--the comic conjuring scenes point up serious errors by the main character in Doctor Faustus[11]--but it was Shakespeare who brought it to perfection. The seduction of Delly Ulver by Ned brings out the entire moral problem which faces Pierre. The breakfast table scene is an excellent piece of subplot stagecraft. Pierre recognizes their affinity so strongly that he feels impelled to rescue Delly as well as Isabel. He also argues for the acceptance of Delly's child, before he knows that it has died. These arguments allow him to formulate his reasons for accepting Isabel, the illegitimate child of his own father. Hamlet has two significant subplots of sons who avenge their fathers; Laertes and Fortinbras are set up as foils to Hamlet, facing similar moral issues and resolving them according to their respective characters. But the Shakespearean play which offers the closest model for Pierre in

this respect is King Lear. The single subplot of Gloucester and his two sons deals with the same problems of filial relationship as the main plot, but with characters who are of lesser stature both morally and socially. Melville knew King Lear well and used it extensively in Moby-Dick, the work immediately preceding Pierre. It would be odd indeed if he had not noted the use of the subplot to reinforce the main plot.

The use of foreshadowing and dramatic irony in Pierre also points to dramatic, though not necessarily Shakespearean, sources. Some of this is done directly by the narrator, whose relationship to the reader is like that of the Greek chorus to the audience. Pierre wishes for a sister, but "if there be any thing a man might well pray against, that thing is the responsive gratification of some of the devoutest prayers of his youth."[12] We are informed several times that Pierre's initial happiness will not last. "Now Pierre stands on this noble pedestal; we shall see if he keeps that fine footing; we shall see if Fate hath not just a little bit of a small word or two to say in this world."[13] Even the direction of his politics will change. "And believe me you will pronounce Pierre a thorough-going Democrat in time; perhaps a little too Radical altogether to your fancy."[14] All of this foreshadowing is done early in the

book, and it serves to set up a form of dramatic irony. You, the reader, have a secret with the narrator, but Pierre is unaware of the cloud hanging over him. The effect of this is to give the reader a "dark" perception even in the lighter portions of the narrative, thus supporting the satiric and ironic effects of the early chapters. Other foreshadowing is given by the speeches of Mrs. Glendinning, and her statements have ironic force because they prove to be exactly the opposite of the truth. "How glad I am that Pierre loves her [Lucy] so, and not some dark-eyed haughtiness, with whom I could never live in peace."[15] "Pray heaven he show his heroicness in some smooth way of favoring fortune, not be called out to be a hero of some dark hope forlorn...whose cruelness makes a savage of a man."[16]

The single Shakespearean play with which Pierre has the closest affinity is, of course, Hamlet. There is a recognizable similarity in the characters, as Matthiessen notes:

> Lucy's pale innocence fails Pierre as Ophelia's did Hamlet; the well-named Reverend Mr. Falsgrave's cushioned voice of worldly policy is not unlike the platitudinizing of Polonius; Charlie Millthorpe plays a kind of Horatio; Glen Stanly confronts Pierre's seemingly mad violence with the decisiveness of Laertes. But the crucial relation here as in Hamlet is that of son and mother.[17]

Both young heroes begin as the "glass of fashion" and both later suffer mental disturbances. Among the obvious verbal

echoes is Pierre's "Oh what a vile juggler and cheat is man!"[18] which is syntactically related to Hamlet's "O what a rogue and peasant slave am I!" When Pierre goes to tell Lucy of his marriage, he comes "as disordered in his person, as haggard in his face."[19] Enter Hamlet to Ophelia. But Pierre is also a kind of sequel to Hamlet; its hero, having read the play, tries to profit by Hamlet's mistakes. When, in his early despair, Pierre glances at his copy of Hamlet, he is reminded of his impotent delay. He resolves to act at once, avoiding Hamlet's fate. In the process, he takes on the rashness of Romeo.

The parallel with Romeo and Juliet is also made explicit by Melville himself. Mary Glendinning calls Pierre "a Romeo" but he denies the identification, because he expects a far happier outcome from his romance. The very first scene in the novel, Pierre's dialogue with Lucy at her upstairs window, is an obvious copy of the famous balcony scene , replete with verbal echoes.[20] Romeo's "I am Fortune's fool" is clearly the inspiration for Pierre's "fool of fate" lament. The prison death scene clearly has the air of the Capulet tomb, even to the rather unlikely phial of poison Isabel carries.

The influence of Macbeth is visible mainly in verbal echoes ("Thy catching nobleness unsexes me"[21]) and in the conspiratorial relationship between Pierre and Isabel. But

there is really no Shakespearean character who parallels Isabel. Lady Macbeth lacks Isabel's primitive innocence, the source of her "ambiguity." The turnkey of Pierre's jail is highly reminiscent of the porter in Macbeth, just as the Saddle Meadows innkeeper is a sort of unholy cross between the porter and Hamlet's witty gravediggers. Melville uses these characters as Shakespeare does, in comic interludes previous to major tragic scenes.

Although we can identify structural elements from Elizabethan-Jacobean, specifically Shakespearean, tragedy in Pierre, and can even find Shakespearean sources for many characters and speeches, there is something very un-Shakespearean about Melville's novel. The morally ambiguous universe simply does not exist in Shakespeare. The dramatist knew too much of life to set up a one-to-one correspondence between virtue and reward; in his comedies the evil are often forgiven, in his tragedies the good often suffer. Nevertheless his universe does respond to evil by creating convulsions within the state, and only when the evil is purged can peace be restored. Although there is much disagreement among critics as to the extent of specifically Christian content in Shakespeare's morality, all agree that he upholds the values of human love, whether filial or romantic, and that such love exerts considerable healing power in a strife-torn world. In the case of Romeo and Juliet it is able to achieve a total reconciliation, though

at great cost. In Moby-Dick there is a saving value in the relationship between Ishmael and Queequeg. But in Pierre, all love is perverted or denied. Evil is not only unpunished, it is unidentified. The general view of human nature is far more pessimistic than Shakespeare's, also. These dissimilarities prompt a closer look at Shakespeare's contemporaries, especially the later Jacobeans, whose tragedies reflect a vision closer to Melville's.

Although most analyses of Renaissance influence on Melville begin and end with Shakespeare, there is ample evidence that Melville knew and used a wide range of literature from the period. In "Battle-Pieces" we find a reference to Webster's play The White Devil.[22] In "The Encantadas" we find a carefully selected group of epigraphs and references ranging from Spenser's Faerie Queene and his satirical "Mother Hubberds Tale" to an obscure Beaumont and Fletcher comedy.[23] Influence from The Anatomy of Melancholy can be detected as early as Mardi. Redburn copies a song from Gammer Gurton's Needle; White-Jacket mentions a Jonsonian bully, Bobadil.[24] In Moby-Dick, chapter 59, there is a reference to Marlowe's Tamburlaine.[25]

Melville's entrance into the Duyckinck circle gave him access to such books as Robert Dodsley's A Select Collection of Old Plays in Duyckinck's library. He rapidly began acquiring his own Renaissance library--first a set

of Shakespeare, then Charles Lamb's Specimens of English Dramatic Poets. On a trip to England in 1849 he acquired a Beaumont and Fletcher folio and editions of Jonson and Marlowe. Throughout his life he continued to acquire criticism, translations, and original literature belonging to the period. Sealts believes that Melville was engaged in studying the Mermaid Series, "The Best Plays of the Old Dramatists," up to the time of his death. The criticism of Lamb, Coleridge, and Hazlitt, which Melville is known to have read, reinforced his propensity for reading the "other Elizabethans."[26] Lamb, especially, stressed that Shakespeare should be regarded as an "elder brother" to a constellation of talented dramatists, all of whom had much to offer.

All of this evidence indicates that our study must go beyond Shakespeare in order to fully explore Melville's Renaissance affinities. For important basic investigation in this area we refer to a dissertation by D. Fern Mathis Eddy.[27] Ms. Eddy argues that these affinities lie in a shared Calvinistic perspective, a fascination with death, sin, and tragedy. In Melville's essay "Hawthorne and His Mosses" Shakespeare, Hawthorne, and Calvinism are grouped together because they epitomize for him the "power of blackness." This perspective led Melville to ignore much of the vitality and affirmation in Renaissance literature. The

markings in his set of Shakespeare, which is available for study, reveal a consistent interest in nihilistic and pessimistic speeches and attitudes. The "dark" comedies seem to have interested Melville far more than the others. As spokesmen for such attitudes, Webster, Tourneur, Marlowe, and Marston, and occasionally Beaumont and Fletcher, must have appealed strongly to Melville, and in fact approximated Melville's outlook more closely than Shakespeare generally did.

Marlowe is a likely source of influence. Himself a rebel and a depicter of rebellious characters, Marlowe created both the Promethean hero and the "mighty line" that made blank verse a powerful and subtle art form. Not only Shakespeare but all of the later dramatists (though sometimes derivatively) owe a debt to Marlowe. The playwright's most prominent verbal device is hyperbole; by hyperbole alone, without the use of scenery, he exalted Tamburlaine to superhuman stature. This device could and did degenerate into bombast, which the playwrights themselves called "fustian." To a nineteenth-century ear like Lamb's, much of Marlowe himself sounded grossly overwritten. But for Melville, so fond of the ornamental rhetoric of Elizabethan English, Lamb's standard probably was not in force. Marlowe could raise the stature of Tamburlaine by having him apostrophize the heavens with nearly incredible boasts.

There is much of Marlovian hyperbole in Pierre's quasi-prayer:

> On my strong faith in ye invisibles, I stake three whole felicities, and three whole lives this day. If ye forsake me now,--farewell to Faith, farewell to Truth, farewell to God; exiled for ay from God and man, I shall declare myself an equal power with both; free to make war on Night and Day, and all thoughts and things of mind and matter, which the upper and the nether firmaments do clasp.[28]

One cannot help recalling the defiance of Tamburlaine, the "scourge of God." Ahab, too, speaks in this boastful form of apostrophe. Shakespeare's heroes rarely boast; one who does, like Hotspur, is made nearly comical. Melville needed to raise the stature of his American heroes so that they would be tragic in a classically accepted sense, for which purpose he adapted the technique of Marlovian hyperbole.

In our study of the gothic novel, we spoke of the importance of the Faust prototype for the gothic mode and for the Romantic movement in general. Lamb inveighed against Goethe's version of Faust, preferring the stark and traditional outlines of Marlowe's drama. In both Lamb's Specimens and his own edition of Marlowe, Melville would have encountered the medieval psychomachia of the good and bad angels in Doctor Faustus. His incorporation of this medieval device into Pierre is an interesting anachronism--it was anachronistic even in Marlowe's play--but in the

course of the novel there is so much confusion between "good" and "bad" that the psychomachia itself becomes an ambiguous element, far from the simplistic clarity it implies. Doctor Faustus is also the only play in Elizabethan or Jacobean canons that possesses a female figure anything like Isabel. In Helen, Marlowe's emblem of classical beauty, Faustus finds incredible fascination but also possible danger. She may well be a succuba whose embrace is damnation; he can never be sure. This terrible paradox hangs over Isabel as well. Melville places considerable emphasis on the facial features of Isabel--is he thinking of the "face that launched a thousand ships?" Poe, of course, wrote a poem "To Helen," and if Melville knew that poem it would have reinforced the impression made by Marlowe's lines.

In Lamb's notes, among other places, Melville would have learned of Marlowe's "atheism." Marlowe is the only one among the constellation of Renaissance dramatists whose religious orthodoxy is seriously open to question. That alone should have attracted Melville, who was ravaged by doubts of his own. The heroes Marlowe created--"infidel" Tamburlaine, Jewish Barabbas, apostate Faustus--can easily be seen as spokesmen for the playwright's own criticism of Christianity, and of Christian society. Such criticism is

a strong element in Pierre. These heroes, including Guise in the mutilated fragment of Massacre at Paris and even embattled Gaveston in Edward II, are "wrong" by social standards and meet appropriate ends. Nevertheless, their defiance and sheer impudence leave the reader feeling that society's standards are simply inadequate for these mentally, if not morally, superior characters. That is not a feeling one gets from Shakespeare's plays, but it is present in Melville's Moby-Dick and Pierre, the two books he wrote most directly under the influence of Renaissance drama. Ahab and Pierre are Marlovian "overreachers."

The plays of Marlowe do presuppose a moral standard even while depicting characters for whom it is inapplicable. Something even closer to the morally ambiguous universe of Pierre does, however, exist in a common type of Renaissance drama, the revenge play. As Fredson Bowers has shown in his classic study, Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy,[29] the old ethic of blood-revenge retained a strong emotional appeal even in an age of Christian ideals and reasonably fair administration of justice. Audience sympathy for a revenger could be relied upon, but only if the revenger did not resort to Machiavellian intrigues and, most important, if he did not survive his victim. The revenge ethic is so paradoxical that he who murders is forgiven if he too dies, and if he follows popular ideals of "fair play." Kyd's

Spanish Tragedy is the first of the Elizabethan revenge tragedies, Hamlet the greatest. As time went on the type became bloodier and more spectacular, as in The Revenger's Tragedy and The Dutchess of Malfi; but the society around the revenger became more obviously corrupt, thereby increasing the moral ambiguity of the revenger's action. That is quite like the situation in Pierre.

Hamlet is a revenge tragedy in which the injury to be avenged has occurred before the play opens and the revenge motive is present from the beginning, influencing everything that happens. In another type, derived from The Spanish Tragedy, the initial injury takes place onstage and the revenger merely precipitates the catastrophe. The audience's opinion of the revenger thus depends upon the nature of the provocation as well as the manner in which he conducts his revenge. Typical props of the revenge tragedy include a ghost which may demand vengeance or preside over the demise of a family; delay by the revenger for any of a variety of reasons; madness in the revenger or a minor character; a play-within-a-play to set up the catastrophe; and the death of several characters including the revenger, who often commits suicide. Hamlet uses all of these props, but it should not be considered as the only model for Melville. Other revenge tragedies the American author could have discovered in Lamb's Specimens and more

complete collections include Antonio's Revenge and The Malcontent by Marston, The Atheist's Tragedy and The Revenger's Tragedy by Tourneur, The Dutchess of Malfi by Webster, The Maid's Tragedy by Beaumont and Fletcher, and Thierry and Theodorcet by Fletcher.

Melville's novel incorporates many of the elements of revenge tragedy. There was no realistic way to incorporate a play-within-a-novel, and a visible ghost really would not do either. The spirit of Pierre's father presides over his house in the form of portraits instead. The ambiguously smiling chair portrait seems to speak to Pierre. Long after he burns it, the face turns up again in the mysterious "foreign portrait." But unlike the ghost of the senior Hamlet, the portrait of the senior Pierre does not resolve an enigma; it creates one. Of course, the ghost is suspected of being a Satanic instrument before its veracity is established by investigation. Pierre retains that possibility.

Pierre is an amalgam of the Hamlet type of play and the Spanish Tragedy type. Pierre is given a task to perform very early in the tale, and the means of accomplishing this task is a central problem throughout the first half of the novel. Although Pierre's task is not blood revenge, it is reparation of a wrong done to one of his blood, and he acts very much like the typical revenger in finding several

reasons for delaying. Volumes have been written about Hamlet's reasons for delay, but in structural terms the revenger in this type must postpone his revenge if the play is to run beyond the first act. Pierre tries out his ideas on his reigning sovereign in the breakfast table scene. After this, he knows where he stands. This subtle and indirect probing of a point of doubt corresponds to Hamlet's staging of the "Mousetrap," after which he has more certainty by which to act.

At this point, the interest in Pierre begins to shift. Next arises the problem of Glen's relationship to Pierre and the various affronts which Pierre receives from him and from the rest of respectable society. Madness is suggested in both Pierre and Isabel at various times, consistent with the genre of revenge tragedy from the time of Hieronymo. Madness provides the revenger both with a reason for delay and an excuse for his eventual action. Pierre finally takes his revenge on Glen; but here Melville inserts a new, ambiguous element. Pierre acts openly but not fairly--he shoots an unarmed man. Does this qualify him for audience sympathy? He does not, at least, resort to poison or intrigue. Like most revengers, Pierre commits suicide in order to expiate himself and swing the balance of sympathy back toward himself. The totally unnecessary deaths of Lucy and Isabel take on more meaning if seen as

part of the conventional gory ending of a revenge tragedy.

Similar to the revenge play but distinct from it is the "villain play," which also presents a morally ambiguous hero. This type is derived from Seneca's Thyestes and Medea and is the type preferred by Marlowe, who added Machiavellian characteristics to some of these villains in leading roles. Clarence V. Boyer, in his study The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy,[30] explains a villain play as one in which the leading character willfully violates serious moral laws which his audience recognizes and believes in. Revenge may be a motive for the villain, in which case this type overlaps revenge tragedy. Other villains, like Macbeth and Richard III, are motivated by ambition.

Again, as we progress from early Elizabethan to late Jacobean plays, we find that the crimes become more spectacular but the society around the villain is depicted as so corrupt that there are few norms by which he can be judged. Many villain plays are badly written and fail to function as tragedy. When they succeed, it is because the hero-villain reveals some great qualities, especially courage, and the waste of the qualities is tragic. Such is the case with Macbeth. There is a subtle difference between a Shakespearean villain like Macbeth and a late Jacobean character like Vittoria Corombona in Webster's White Devil.

Both accept their punishment with admirable courage, but Macbeth regrets the wrong he has done, whereas Vittoria is defiant to the end. Her judge is as shrewish as herself, and none of the representatives of respectable society have much stature. Also present in later Jacobean drama is the "malcontent" figure, often a type of villain. Like the hero of Marston's Malcontent, this figure is disgusted with the decadent society around him and eloquently critical of it. His own intrigues, however Machiavellian, hardly seem wrong against such a backdrop. This method of creating moral ambiguity differs from Marlowe's. Instead of denigrating the society around the villain, Marlowe raises the villain to such stature that he can deny that common morality should apply to him. Melville uses both methods, creating a moral ambiguity that is partly Marlovian and partly late Jacobean, but scarcely Shakespearean.

Another element which Melville would have encountered in Renaissance drama is the motif of incest. This motif is common in the gothic mode, probably because the English gothicists were themselves steeped in early drama, and Melville thus had contact with it in both its Renaissance and Romantic manifestations. The riddle to be solved in Shakespeare's Pericles concerns a case of incest which, however, is regarded with extreme aversion. There is little

doubt that Melville recognized the Oedipal component of Hamlet's relationship with his mother and used that insight to establish a similar tie between Pierre and Mary Glendinning. Other plays available to Melville which encompass incest, either overt or latent, include The Revenger's Tragedy (partly cribbed from Hamlet), The Dutchess of Malfi, 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, Rollo: Or, The Bloody Brother, and A King and No King.[31] In Ford's 'Tis Pity there is a case of brother-sister incest rather like that of Isabel and Pierre. The lovers are attracted to one another by physical excellence and superior virtue, which neither can match in a partner from the corrupt outside world. Their attraction is treated quite sympathetically. Melville had the good sense to know that a story as explicitly incestuous as 'Tis Pity would be commercially useless; also, one hopes, he had the good taste to avoid spectacle for its own sake. Therefore the incest motif is treated subtly in Pierre. The attraction is obviously present, but whether it is consummated remains one of the novel's "ambiguities." To be sure the reader does not miss the point, Melville adds a reference to Beatrice Cenci and has Pierre identify himself in a dream with Enceladus, "the son and grandson of an incest." This openness in speaking of incest does seem more Jacobean than gothic; in the gothic mode the word itself is rarely used.

Because the Renaissance dramatists learned and borrowed so much from one another, it is difficult to separate the influence of Shakespeare from that of his contemporaries in Melville's work. It was apparently the whole body of Renaissance drama which exerted the influence, not merely a single dramatist or play. The structure of Pierre is closely analagous to the five-act form of Renaissance tragedy. The parallel is so close that it is unlikely to be accidental. Pierre as a tragic hero is apparently modeled on the one-sided heroes of the drama, with Hamlet and Romeo as recognizable influences. In their quality of defiance, however, exemplified by a challenge to the gods, both Pierre and Melville's earlier creation Ahab resemble Marlowe's prototypical heroes. The influence of Shakespeare is obvious linguistically in verbal echoes from Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, Macbeth, and other plays. At times, however, Pierre speaks in the hyperbolic apostrophe one associates with Marlowe. We can also recognize characters and scenes borrowed from Shakespeare but modified to fit their new places. This, of course, was the practice of many of Shakespeare's younger contemporaries. Both the revenge tragedy and the villain play seem to have influenced Pierre, especially in suggesting methods of creating moral ambiguity. The use of foreshadowing and of the subplot in Pierre derives from the drama, as well. The theme of incest

is common in Renaissance drama and may have been derived by Melville from that source.

One could say that technically the influence of Shakespeare is strong, though not exclusive, in Pierre. But Melville puts these matters of craft such as scenes, language, and structure to uses hardly Shakespearean. He depicts a hero whose own moral stature is equivocal and places him against a corrupt society. There is no moral norm. This is nearly the situation found in a Jacobean play like Marston's Malcontent or Webster's White Devil, but intensified. Both of these plays have weak feminine figures, Maria and Isabella, who exemplify traditional standards, though not too effectively. Melville removes even this prop of certainty by undermining Lucy. Defying the gods amid the moral ruins of his society, Pierre plays out his tragedy in traditional scenes and language, modified so that his predicament is yet more ambiguous than that of any previous actor.

NOTES

[1]American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970).

[2]"Melville and Shakespeare," The Shakespeare Association Bulletin, 7 (July, 1932), 103-112.

[3]"Shakespeare and Melville's Pierre," Boston Public Library Quarterly, 6 (1954), 43-51.

[4]"The Hidden Sun: A Study of the Influence of Shakespeare on the Creative Imagination of Herman Melville." Dissertation Univ. of California, Los Angeles, 1965.

[5]Matthiessen, American Renaissance, p. 467.

[6]Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1956).

[7]"Shakespeare and the Tragic Pattern," Proceedings of the British Academy, 44 (1958), 146.

[8]Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 15.

[9]Ibid., p. 20.

[10]Tragic Form in Shakespeare (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1972).

[11]Some critics dispute the authorship of these particular scenes. Since they are so different from the solemn theme of the main plot, some believe that they are by another hand than Marlowe's.

[12]Pierre, p. 6.

[13]Ibid., p. 11.

[14]Ibid., p. 13.

[15]Ibid., p. 21.

[16]Ibid., p. 22.

[17]Matthiessen, pp. 477-478.

[18]Pierre, p. 320.

[19]Ibid., p. 215.

[20]For all of these similarities and verbal echoes, see Elinor Yaggy's article, note #3 in this chapter.

[21]Pierre, p. 188.

[22]Hennig Cohen, "Melville and Webster's The White Devil," Emerson Society Quarterly, 33 (1963), 33.

[23]Buford Jones, "Spenser and Shakespeare in The Encantadas, Sketch VI," Emerson Society Quarterly, 35 (1964), 68-73; and D. Mathis Eddy, "Melville's Response to Beaumont and Fletcher: A New Source for The Encantadas," American Literature, 40 (1968), 374-380.

[24]Darlene Fern Mathis Eddy, "A Dark Similitude: Melville and the Elizabethan-Jacobean Perspective," Dissertation Rutgers University, 1967, p. 48.

[25]Hughes, "Melville and Shakespeare."

[26]All of the above information is to be found in Merton M. Sealts, Jr., Melville's Reading: A Check-list of Books Owned and Borrowed (Madison, Wisc.: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1966).

[27]see note #24.

[28]Pierre, p. 126.

[29]Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy 1587-1642 (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1940).

[30](New York: Russel and Russel, 1964).

[31]This list is taken from Eddy, "Dark Similitude," p. 300.

CHAPTER 5

PIERRE AS PSYCHOLOGICAL NOVEL

The term "psychological novel" is rarely applied outside twentieth-century criticism, although every good author from the time of Homer in Western literary tradition has been interested in providing some motivation for the actions of his characters. It refers to a type of novel in which the primary interest is concentrated upon the explication of a single character in its full psychological complexity. Action and setting have only secondary importance and are used to highlight this character. There may, however, be other analyzed characters who serve as foils to highlight the hero.

The modern psychological novel is associated with a group of special techniques. The narrative point of view in these twentieth-century works is manipulated to eliminate the narrator and allow the reader a direct glimpse into the disturbed consciousness which is being analyzed. This is a trend which began with Henry James' attempts to circumvent the narrator and led to the "interior monologue" or "stream of consciousness" technique pioneered by James Joyce and others of his contemporaries.[1] Another method

of introducing the reader directly to the hero is that of the confessional novel, whose roots are traced to Dostoevsky's Notes from the Underground and whose branches lead to Gide, Sartre, Camus, Arthur Koestler, William Golding, and Saul Bellow.[2] In this type, the hero feels a compulsion to justify himself to some minor character; in the course of one or more long monologues, he examines his past, his inmost thoughts, and his values in a search for "some form of perception."[3]

Murray argues that Pierre is a confession, citing Melville's recent reading of Rousseau's Confessions, Goethe's Autobiography, DeQuincey's Autobiographical Sketches and Confessions of an Opium Eater, among others, as well as the similarities between several characters in the novel and members of Melville's circle. But if Pierre is a confessional novel, it is singularly unlike any of the other examples scholars have explored. It would have to be considered as a disguised autobiography if Murray is correct, and not as a true novel at all. There is no direct confession by any of the characters; the primary condition of the definition of the confessional novel is therefore not met unless, as Murray apparently does, one considers the narrator as the confessional character. However, there is considerable evidence for an ironic conception of the

narrator which is inconsistent with autobiography. Murray's hypothesis also fails to account for the use of other forms which are demonstrably present, namely, the novel of manners, the gothic romance, the Menippean satire, Elizabethan tragedy, and (fragmentarily) the epic and the anatomy. Surely these have more function than that of a smoke-screen for disguised autobiography; it is the purpose of this study to elucidate many of those functions.

Though it is not a confessional novel, Pierre belongs in the same general category of psychological novel. Criticism customarily does not trace the psychological novel earlier than James because the special techniques which have come to be associated with it are rarely found before then. There is also a popular prejudice that "psychology" as a serious study does not exist before Freud. Actually, the important pioneering works of James Joyce, Marcel Proust, and Dorothy Richardson all came out before the translation and popularization of Freud. The phrase "stream of consciousness" is itself taken from the writings of influential psychologist William James. There is also considerable psychological interest in Renaissance drama, poetry, and prose, based on the system of humors. Melville was quite familiar with this body of literature, and especially with Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, a psychological treatise.

Without insisting upon either a modern psychological system or the absence of the omniscient narrator, we may now look for examples of psychological studies in novels more nearly contemporary with Melville. In a recent study of American fiction, Gordon O. Taylor[4] claims that in the years between 1870 and 1900, American writers changed their basic view of the mind from

> a concept of static, discrete mental states requiring representational emphasis on the conventional nature of particular states, toward a concept of organically linked mental states requiring representational emphasis on the nature of the sequential process itself.[5]

This statement is based on a study of the "realists" James, Howells, Crane, Norris, and Dreiser. Taylor compares the characterization in an earlier novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin, with that in Sister Carrie. In Stowe's work, the characters are motivated by particular traits which always remain the same regardless of circumstances. In Dreiser's novel, radical moral changes take place in both Carrie and Hurstwood as a result of both internal and environmental factors. Stowe characterizes Tom with, in her own words, a "daguerreotype"--his physical appearance, his piety, his general goodness are frozen and unchanging. In Pierre, which came out in the same year (1852) as Uncle Tom's Cabin, Melville has his character refuse repeatedly and violently to be daguerreotyped.

Melville is already ahead of the mainstream, working with a view of character as plastic rather than static. The disintegration of Pierre is as carefully detailed as that of Hurstwood.

In attaining this concept of character, Melville was probably greatly assisted by the example of his friend Hawthorne in The Scarlet Letter. In that novel, the character of Hester undergoes a gradual transformation for the better, while that of Dimmesdale completely disintegrates. It is practically a Carrie-Hurstwood parallel configuration, though with differing moral foundations. It is vital to recognize that Hawthorne's great novel, like many of his shorter works including "The Bosom Serpent" and "The Minister's Black Veil," deals with intricate psychological processes using a terminology and a set of symbols derived from theology. For Hawthorne, a study of the human heart meant a study of sin and its consequences; and the essential hypothesis in his psychology is that of original sin. His psychology is nevertheless psychology, but it is not the detached and studiedly amoral discipline we know today. His guilt complex is a "bosom serpent" or a large scarlet letter; the desire to dominate another being becomes the unpardonable sin; alienation is a palpable veil; and so on.

To a certain extent, this tendency to discuss

psychological states in moral terms is evident in Pierre, and accounts for many of the allusions to Dante which we shall explore. Melville also had precedents for detailed psychological portraiture in the gothic mode, which is discussed in another chapter. Lewis' The Monk carefully analyzes the forces, both environmental and subconscious, which gradually convert its hero from saint to fiend. Frankenstein provides an even clearer example. In the case of the monster, the novel argues the Godwinian concept that successful domestic life prevents crime while the deprivation of normal affection creates the most horrible criminals. The surrealistic scenes in the Siberian waste accurately reflect the condition of Frankenstein's mind; the intricate system of resemblances between the narrator, Frankenstein, and the monster also reveals considerable "modern" psychological insight. The entire work has been called "a brilliant psychological novel in which the psychology is the action itself."[6] The entire movement toward the Byronic hero which marks the gothic novel just before the Romantic period proper is really a trend toward the study of abnormal psychology, sometimes bordering on the morally boggy ground of psychological determinism.

Considering Pierre as a psychological novel gives us a framework for understanding the allusions to Dante's Inferno which are otherwise rather anomalous. We have

little trouble understanding the purpose of the allusions to Hamlet, with which the Inferno is paired in Pierre's mind.[7] Besides similarities in themes and characters, Melville seems to have made his novel similar in structure to Elizabethan tragedy. Hamlet provides both thematic and generic inspiration, as the author all but points out himself. But Dante as generic model simply does not fit. There are a few devices which may be construed as epic:[8] there are invocations to grief, to the mysterious face, to the "sovereign powers" above, to the Terror Stone; but as most of these are spoken by Pierre and not the narrator, they belong more to dramatic soliloquy than to epic invocation. Certain of the rhetorical extravagances may be called epic similes, as they are intricate sustained metaphors. There is, as well, Pierre's elaborate genealogy. However, I feel that such devices are best discussed as satire and parody. These standard epic devices are, furthermore, rather scarce in Dante, whose idea of epic form was based on allegorical exegesis of the classical epics rather than on the works themselves. There is certainly no attempt in Pierre to parallel Dante's intricate structure either in the use of triads or the creation of a special geography. What Melville took from Dante was his basic metaphor of a descent into hell and also certain of his symbols, which

were then applied to a discussion of the psychological disintegration of young Pierre.

The references to Dante occur throughout the novel fairly close to the order in which they occur in the Inferno. Melville purchased Cary's translation of Dante in 1848, and this is the version he quotes from. The first indication of Dante's influence is in the relationship between Lucy and Pierre. Lucia is the messenger sent by the Virgin Mary to inform Beatrice of Dante's plight, all of which takes place before the opening of the narrative. Mary, Lucia, and Beatrice form a kind of Trinity in which Mary is totally passive, Lucia a principle of light which can reach out to man, and Beatrice an embodiment of pure love sent out to lend its presence to mankind.[9] Lucy and Isabel (who is compared to Beatrice Cenci--a highly ironic parallel if intentional) resemble Lucia and Beatrice. If he read Cary's notes, Melville knew about Dante's Vita Nuova, the very embodiment of the Italian courtly love tradition which influenced, probably ironically, Melville's depiction of Pierre's youthful love. We also have a Mary in Mrs. Glendinning, the power behind the scene, though she is the opposite of saintly. Such inversions are perfectly consistent with a deliberate structure of ambiguity and irony.

Dante's first circle is Limbo. Hell actually begins with the second circle, where carnal sinners are placed. Semiramis is the first person Dante meets there; Mary Glendinning is specifically compared to Semiramis. Also in this circle are Paulo and Francesca. Pierre refuses to look at Dante with Lucy for fear of some such dark fate as theirs. It then occurs to him that Isabel's face reminds him of Francesca's, and he bursts out, "Damned be the hour I read in Dante! more damned than that wherein Paulo and Francesca read in fatal Launcelot."[10] After he receives Isabel's letter, Pierre's confusion about reality is emphasized by a direct quotation from the Inferno:

> Ah! how dost thou change.
> Agnello! See! thou art not double now
> Nor only one!"[11]

Actually, this should be "nor double"; Melville has slightly misquoted. The passage comes from Canto XXV. Agnello, a false Florentine politician, is tormented by a serpent with whose shape his own form fluctuates constantly.

Then there are minor echoes. Pierre wanders in a dark wood, and Isabel's description of the madhouse is Dantesque. A cat in one of her early homes is prone to "serpent hissings" which haunt her memory. The next actual reference occurs during Pierre's night of decision, where Melville goes out of chronological order to find a thematic quotation. He selects the inscription over the gate of Hell.

This occurs much earlier in Dante, but Melville uses it here to emphasize that Pierre is now entering a new hell. An interpretation of the Inferno follows:

> The man Dante Alighieri received unforgivable affronts and insults from the world; and the poet Dante Alighieri bequeathed his immortal curse to it, in the sublime malediction of the Inferno. The fiery tongue whose political forkings lost him the solacements of this world, found its malicious counterpart in that muse of fire, which would forever bar the vast bulk of mankind from all solacement in the world to come.[12]

> Torn into a hundred shreds the printed pages of Hell and Hamlet lay at his feet, which trampled them, while their vacant covers mocked him with their idle titles. Dante had made him fierce, and Hamlet had insinuated that there was none to strike. Dante had taught him that he had bitter cause of quarrel; Hamlet taunted him with faltering in the fight.[13]

This is of course the narrator's interpretation--Pierre has not thought about these meanings very clearly.

Pierre is twice compared to a devil, once by his mother[14] and, in the last scene, by Frederick Tartan.[15] That identification could be a reference either to the Inferno or to Paradise Lost. There is a specific reference to Milton in Book XI.[16] Pierre's entry into New York meets with obstacles as does Dante's entry into the City of Dis, and the hack drivers are called "Charon ferry-men."[17] The riotous watch-house corresponds to the evil enclosed within the City of Dis. Pavement is

important in both cities, though Melville's is cold and Dante's smoking. Some of the worst of Dante's sinners are encased in ice in one of the lower circles. Pierre suffers constantly from cold in his poorly heated room, and as he shivers he writes what Millthorpe calls an "Inferno." Pierre's dream of Enceladus comes in Book XXV, near the end of the novel. The half-buried figure resembles one of Dante's giants, Canto XXXI, who "stand immersed/ Each from his navel downward,"[18] as a punishment for their rebellion against Heaven. Pierre then descends still lower, into the confined pit of a "low dungeon" whose "long tiers of massive cell-galleries above seemed partly piled on him."[19] This is the only time he is actually underground except for his brief, foreshadowing flirtation with the Terror Stone. In the lowest circle of Dante's hell Satan is imprisoned; Pierre has not only found this low point, he has become identified with the fiend himself.

References to the Inferno are consistently correlated with the downward progress of Pierre's life, so that it is nearly possible to trace where he is at any given point. Although Melville does not consistently follow Dante's scheme in the ordering of Pierre's sins, there is a progressive moral deterioration from the carnal (attraction to Isabel) to the violent and finally to treason, as the murder of Glen can be interpreted. Fraud, which Dante places in the eighth circle, comes very early in Melville's

novel and such sins as gluttony and avarice do not really figure in Pierre. The scheme is intended to correspond in general, not specific, points to Dante's. Pierre is not a descent into hell in any epic sense; it is a descent into the hell of the human spirit, into the darker aspects of the subconscious. Dante's Inferno provides a structure of metaphor for Melville to use in talking about this descent. That the terms of the metaphor are moral and theological was not an objection to its validity; Hawthorne had proved that.

The other important source for the psychological system used in Pierre is Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy. This book had a surprisingly strong influence on Melville throughout his career, beginning with an allusion to it in his earliest known work, "Fragments from a Writing Desk." He apparently knew the book only in abridged form before purchasing a complete edition in 1848. Burton used "anatomy" to mean a treatise on or analysis of his stated subject; that is the meaning it has in this study. Burton's influence was both stylistic and structural, and is most obvious in Moby-Dick. Nathalia Wright[20], who traces this influence, finds very little in Pierre; that, however, is because Melville uses Burton as an expert psychologist rather than a stylistic model for Pierre. Despite his espousal of such ancient doctrines as the four humors and

the four souls, Burton is surprisingly modern in many of his insights. He comes across as a "humanistic precursor of Freud."[21] He distinguished between melancholy and actual madness, roughly as we would explain the difference between depression and true psychosis. He recognized that deprivation of sex can cause mental illness, and was the first to classify "religious melancholy," theologically manifested states which he recognized as related to "love melancholy."

From Burton, Melville could have acquired many of the insights that he used to explain Pierre's deterioration. There are many indications that Pierre, like Hamlet, suffers from "melancholy." After a stint at the Apostles', he manifests all the classical symptoms--refusal of food, insomnia, a preference for solitude and darkness, a tendency to prefer his own dream-world to the real world; also the only favorable symptom, an intensified intellect or "wit." He arrives at this state after a course of life which includes many of the things Burton describes as causes of melancholy--unfulfilled sexual desires, poor diet, lack of exercise, bad air, distress over his continued poverty and failure to achieve preferment, grief over the death of a relative and one peculiarly applicable to the scholarly, too much studying, which forces the mortal part to keep pace with the immortal. Melville uses this dichotomy when

he speaks of Pierre's sending his soul out to labor for his body's sustenance. When, in the midst of his distress, Pierre turns jocular in his note to Dates, he is acting like Democritus, Burton's "laughing philosopher," who found mankind so pitiably foolish that he could only react with a laugh. Facts like Burton's gave Melville a scientific and clinical framework, primitive though it was, for examining human aberrations, and contributed to the ambiguity, something which a moral framework alone would tend to undermine. Like thousands of jurors in cases where pleas of insanity are entered, the reader must puzzle over the problem of whether or not Pierre is culpable.

Melville naturally had another source, one open to any author--his own knowledge of life and people. Because he used this source frequently and spoke openly in his narrative persona, the book is usually interpreted as an analysis of its author's character rather than Pierre's. If, however, we assume that the narrator's comments are intended to elucidate Pierre, we have a psychological rather than a confessional novel. Part of the difficulty arises from the technique of the omniscient narrator, something which later psychological novels understandably abandoned. Melville himself recognized the difficulty of portraying two minds by one narrative voice. After a long generalization concerning folly and wisdom, the narrator carefully

explains that "the thoughts we here indite as Pierre's are to be very carefully discriminated from those we indite concerning him."[22]

The narrator begins early, with his explication of Pierre's family history and upbringing, to reveal the forces shaping Pierre's character. His first major analytical stroke is the presentation of an Oedipal relationship between Pierre and his mother. Related to that incestuous attraction is another; physical attraction, not disinterested philanthropy, is the primary motive for Pierre's kindness to Isabel:

> Thus, already, and ere the proposed encounter, he was assured that, in a transcendent degree, womanly beauty, and not womanly ugliness, invited him to champion the right. Be naught concealed in this book of sacred truth. How, if accosted in some squalid lane, a humped, and crippled, hideous girl should have snatched his garment's hem, with--Save me, Pierre--love me, own me, brother; I am thy sister!"--Ah, if man were wholly made in heaven, why catch we hell-glimpses? Why in the noblest marble pillar that stands beneath the all-comprising vault, ever should we descry the sinister vein?[23]

Immediately following this is the narrator's statement of his intention to reveal the whole man including the sinister, or subconscious, side:

> I am more frank with Pierre than the best men are with themselves. I am all unguarded and magnanimous with Pierre; therefore you see his weakness, and therefore only. In reserves men build imposing characters; not in revelations.

> He who shall be wholly honest, though nobler than Ethan Allan; that man shall stand in danger of the meanest mortal's scorn.[24]

In his description of Isabel's spell-binding qualities, Melville capitalizes on the popular fad of animal magnetism; but he also adds evidence for his repeated theme that men are not, at least consciously, masters of their fates. Pierre's plan to call his sister a wife originates, the narrator suggests, in his practice of calling his mother a sister. Thus nearly everything Pierre does in relation to Isabel is motivated by subconscious forces which he can neither understand nor control. We have already discussed in a previous chapter Isabel's function as anima. Her potent attraction partially derives from her embodiment of so many repressed qualities in Pierre. Murray considers Isabel to be the best portrayal of the anima in Romantic literature.

The changes in Pierre's philosophical thought are explained by a different method. A group of "advanced thinkers," presumably including the narrator, is postulated. Pierre's progress is correlated with the common experience of this group. Because their reception by the world is hostile, these men experience varying degrees of disillusionment.[25] By his use of frequent generalizations, the narrator keeps appealing to this concept of group experience which, as every advertiser knows, lends great authority

to any statement. One of the most prominent of these generalizations is Melville's metaphoric statement of the isolation of the advanced thinker:

> That hour in the life of a man when first the help of humanity fails him, and he learns that in his obscurity and indigence humanity holds him a dog and no man: that hour is a hard one, but not the hardest. There is still another hour which follows, when he learns that in his infinite comparative minuteness and abjectness, the gods do likewise despise him, and own him not of their clan. Divinity and humanity then are equally willing that he should starve in the street for all that either will do for him. Now cruel father and mother have both let go his hand, and the little soul-toddler, now you shall hear his shriek and his wail, and often his fall.[26]

Throughout statements like this runs the assumption that many others have trodden the same path, and that Pierre's pain is the natural consequence of his advance.

There are other flashes of shrewd psychological insight. Pierre's failure to foresee the consequences of his "marriage" is explained by a general human tendency to look only at the favorable side of a cause one espouses.[27] Today this tendency is called the avoidance of cognitive dissonance. His readiness to sacrifice Lucy is shown to be a temporary desire for self-torture, a "dark, mad mystery in some human hearts, which sometimes, during the tyranny of a usurper mood, leads them to be all eagerness to cast off the most intense beloved bond as a hindrance...."[28] The chapter entitled "The Cousins" gives a shrewd analysis of

the homosexual component in adolescent friendships and the relaxation of these intense friendships as normal heterosexual patterns emerge. Glen also functions as Pierre's "shadow," another type of alter ego. The hereditary aspect of mental illness is brought out when Pierre learns that his mother, like his father, has died insane. He then worries seriously about his own sanity. His failure to comprehend or apply Plinlimmon's advice is described as a result of his mind's functioning on two levels, and is one of Melville's shrewdest strokes of psychology:

> Could he likewise have carried about with him in his mind the thorough understanding of the book, and yet not be aware that he so understood it? I think that, regarded in one light, the final career of Pierre will seem to show, that he <u>did</u> understand it. And here it may be randomly suggested, by way of bagatelle, whether some things that men think they do not know, are not for all that thoroughly comprehended by them; and yet, so to speak, though contained in themselves, are kept a secret from themselves? The idea of Death seems such a thing.[29]

Beginning with Book XXII, Melville takes a closer look at Pierre in New York. He details Pierre's physical and mental stresses, quoting from the character's own manuscript. Pierre exhibits obvious symptoms of mental disturbance--loss of appetite (his appetite was excessive in Saddle Meadows), insomnia, a love of darkness and solitude, a tendency to daydream continuously. His inability to function in the "real world" is pointed up by the scene

with the porter who delivers Lucy's easel, when Pierre is so abstracted that he hands the man a key instead of a coin. Only with the aid of Millthorpe can Pierre's household function at all. The young hero reaches his lowest point with his dream of Enceladus. It does not require a Freudian expert to perceive that this is a dream about impotence, both sexual and otherwise. Pierre is highly disturbed by this dream, which seems extremely real to him. A dispassionate clinical observer would have to admit that Pierre is definitely ill at this time.

It is interesting that Melville removes all indications of suddenness from the murder itself. Instead of being motivated by a sudden outburst of uncontrollable rage, Pierre is called a "desperado" who coolly plans his crime. "Fate, or what you will, had made him such."[30] At the end of a clearly delineated process, Pierre has deteriorated to the point of savagery. His conscious, civilized self has given way under the stress of subconscious desires and material failure. It is in part to this emergent savage that Isabel refers in her final sentence, "All's o'er, and ye know him not."

Robert Burton claimed to have written his Anatomy of Melancholy in order to combat the disease in himself, through understanding the exact causes of his illness and some of the cures. Perhaps something of this sort underlay

Melville's keen psychological studies in Pierre. The intensive analysis of what can happen to a rebel is an abstract exercise. At the same time, it does have personal applications. Pierre's descent into hell through layers of sin and error is, like Dante's, instructive. In the fourteenth century, faith was sufficient to provide an escape from hell; in Melville's novel, as in most twentieth-century psychological novels, no such easy solution exists. One must beware of Pierre's fate and avoid it by understanding it. For, once in hell,

> no forgiveness thence come: so that the penitent whose sad victim lies in the ground, for that useless penitent his doom is eternal, and though it be Christmas-day with all Christendom, with him it is Hell-day and an eaten liver forever.[31]

In the introduction to his edition of Pierre, Murray repeatedly refers to Melville's surprising skill in "depth psychology." The elaboration of the Oedipal relationship and the anima are remarkable anticipations of Freud and Jung. These deep subconscious factors are made openly visible in the case of our fictitous young patient. Melville demonstrates how Pierre's noble championship of Isabel and his admirable filial respect have underlying incestuous motivations, and how his adolescent friendship with Glen has a homosexual component. Such "openness," which exposes even "the best men" to "the meanest mortal's

scorn" for their culturally unacceptable psychic secrets, is generally attributed only to post-Freudians. But Melville is not as simplistic as Freudians sometimes tend to be. His case study of Pierre presents a human being of enormous complexity whose intellectual life is broad and vigorous. Pierre's difficulties in reconciling his culturally conditioned opinions with his culturally unacceptable drives lead to a variety of changes in his philosophy. Although he commits bizarre actions such as eloping with Isabel and shooting Glen, Pierre finds justifications for everything he does. This capacity for self-justification is one of the most fascinating aspects of the human psyche. Melville traces the origins of Pierre's mentality, follows his thinking as it accomodates to and influences his actions, and finally details Pierre's descent into mental illness.

No other character is examined with anything like the scrutiny devoted to Pierre. The importance of even those we know best--Isabel, Mary Glendinning, Lucy, and Glen--is derived from their relationship to Pierre. Glen, Isabel, and to some extent Lucy act as his alter egos. What little plot the novel has is shaped around Pierre's inward journey and serves to illuminate him. This focus on a single character to the exclusion of others is characteristic of the psychological novel, as is the meagreness of the action. In our discussion of Shakespearean tragedy

we mentioned that in most of those plays character is fate; the conjunction of a unique person with his particular circumstances sets off a chain of events leading to the catastrophe. Melville has enlarged and elaborated on Shakespeare. Because he recognizes that character is modified over a period of time, he does not confine character analysis to the exposition. The complex interaction between Pierre's beliefs, his external circumstances, and his previous actions is traced. As Pierre descends step by step into his personal hell, the reader is shown how each step inevitably follows the previous one.

With understanding comes sympathy for the young hero. The effect of perusing a psychological novel is confusion over morality. Treatments of the Byronic hero in late gothic works, similarly, reveal an extraordinary character whose incompatibility with his life situation has left him embittered. Melmoth the Wanderer receives sympathy, for even though he torments others, they cannot suffer as much as Melmoth himself suffers for all eternity. Crime and Punishment is a good example of this effect in an early psychological novel. Although a terrible crime is associated with the hero almost from the beginning, the reader comes to understand and forgive him. His arrest, though deserved, is unwelcome. Melville's psychological analysis in Pierre repeatedly demonstrates that Pierre's

course is shaped by forces over which he has no conscious control. Trying to act as a saint, Pierre becomes a murderer. Should he be judged by his intentions or by his actions? Should his extraordinary suffering exculpate him? Can we judge him at all, since we are subject to similar forces ourselves? Nowhere else in his output does Melville conform so closely to the demands of the psychological novel. His doing so in Pierre is apparently another strategy for increasing the ambiguity of the novel.

NOTES

[1]see Leon Edel, The Psychological Novel 1900-1950 (New York: J.B. Lippincott and Co., 1955).

[2]see Peter Axthelm, The Modern Confessional Novel (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1967).

[3]Axthelm, p. 8.

[4]in The Passages of Thought: Psychological Representation in the American Novel 1870-1900 (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969).

[5]Taylor, pp. 5-6.

[6]George Levine, "Frankenstein and the Tradition of Realism," Novel, 7 (1973), 17.

[7]This identification occurs in Book IX, sections ii, iii, and iv.

[8]These are traced in R.K. Gupta's article, "Melville's Use of Non-Novelistic Conventions in Pierre," Emerson Society Quarterly, 48 (1967), 141-145.

[9]see Jefferson B. Fletcher, Symbolism of the Divine Comedy (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1921).

[10]Pierre, p. 48.

[11]Ibid., p. 100.

[12]Ibid., p. 198.

[13]Ibid., pp. 199-200.

[14]"'Tis not for thee, hired one, to rail at my son, though he were Lucifer, simmering in Hell!" Pierre, p. 235.

[15]"Thou hellish carrion, this is thy hellish work!" p. 426.

[16]"But Pierre was not arguing Fixed Fate and Free Will, now: Fixed Fate and Free Will were arguing him, and Fixed Fate got the better in the debate." p. 214.

[17]p. 273.

[18]All quotations from the Inferno are taken from Cary's translation published by Harvard Classics (New York: P.F. Collier and Son, 1937). Line numbers are not given in this version. The above is found on p. 128.

[19]Pierre, p. 424.

[20]"Melville and 'Old Burton' with 'Bartleby' as an Anatomy of Melancholy," Tennessee Studies in Literature, 15 (1970), 1-13.

[21]"Introduction" to Robert Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy, All-English text, ed. by Floyd Dell and Paul Jordan-Smith (New York: Tudor Pub. Co., 1951), p. xiii.

[22]Pierre, p. 196.

[23]Ibid., p. 127.

[24]Ibid.

[25]"...almost every thinking man must have been some time or other struck with the idea, that...all the world does never gregariously advance to Truth, but only here and there some of its individuals do; and by advancing, leave the rest behind; cutting themselves forever adrift from their sympathy, and making themselves always liable to be regarded with distrust, dislike, and often, downright--though, ofttimes, concealed--fear and hate." p. 195.

[26]pp. 348-9.

[27]"...it is either the gracious or the malicious gift of the great gods to man, that on the threshold of any wholly new and momentous devoted enterprise, the thousand ulterior intricacies and imperilings to which it must conduct; these, at the outset, are mostly withheld from sight...." p. 206.

[28]p. 212.

[29]p. 346.

[30]p. 396.

[31]p. 336.

CHAPTER 6

PIERRE AS SYMBOLIST NOVEL

Debate and discussion on the definition of linguistic symbols and signs has been carred out by such critics as I.A. Richards, Susanne Langer, and her mentor Ernst Cassirer. Without going through these discussions again, we will accept for the purposes of this study a basic dichotomy between logical and translogical ("poetic") uses of language. Philip Wheelwright[1] describes poetic language as having the following characteristics: it is "iconic," partly self-referent, so that no other image or choice of vocabulary would be exactly equivalent; it has "plurisignation," or a multiplicity of valid meanings; it has a "soft focus," being deliberately imprecise; it may encompass private meanings which are not available to the general reader; it is generally less assertive than purely logical statements, and includes possibilities, tentative suggestions, even moods; it often contains paradoxes which could not be tolerated in purely logical writing; and it often implies a final mystery rather than a final solution. These criteria apply to Pierre as a whole, to individual scenes and images, and often to smaller units

of language which make up the book.

Skirting the problem of defining the literary symbol, we shall accept W.Y. Tindall's definition of the symbolist novel as "a kind distinguished by the deliberate or unconscious exploitation of symbolic possibilities."[2] Tindall goes on to say, "Melville and Flaubert had written novels of this sort"[3] before it became a recognized type. In Melville's case such exploitation was partly unconscious but quite often deliberate. Several critics have recently begun openly to call Melville a symbolist writer, especially in connection with Moby-Dick. Furthermore, the tendency toward symbolic form was part of a movement in America which, through French studies of Poe, led directly to the poetic movement known as Symbolism and influenced such pioneers of modern prose as James Joyce and Gertrude Stein.[4]

> In the central work of Hawthorne, Whitman, Melville, and Poe, symbolism is at once technique and theme. It is a governing principle: not a stylistic device, but a point of view; not a casual subject, but a pervasive presence in the intellectual landscape.[5]

In Melville's career we can trace an obvious progression in his use of symbolic technique. Each of his novels, even Israel Potter, has at least one powerful symbol, and generally this symbol is of central importance. Typee exploits the Edenic possibilities of its setting with considerably more skill than one would expect in such an early work. Omoo continues that motif, though less

skillfully because it is less focused. Mardi introduces the microcosm and the voyage of discovery, which Melville would use often again, as well as the pairing of light and dark ladies which reappears in Pierre. Redburn has its symbolic guidebook. White-Jacket takes its name from its central symbol, as does Moby-Dick. The symbolic rebirth of White-Jacket, encompassing his fall from the masthead, near-drowning, and emergence from his white cocoon, is as highly developed a piece of symbolism as anything in Melville.

With Moby-Dick we see the continuing sophistication of Melville's method. Symbols become less static and more dependent on their relationship with other symbolic objects, characters, and events. Whereas it is not too difficult to cope with the question, "What does the guidebook represent?" or "What does the white jacket represent?" such a question in regard to the white whale has very little meaning unless we consider the entire matrix--the ship, the men, and the events of the voyage. The same may be said of the novels which follow--Pierre, The Confidence Man, Israel Potter to some extent, and Billy Budd. These works incline toward multiple rather than simplistic interpretation. At the end of Pierre we are left with three corpses in a dungeon; The Confidence Man closes with the Cosmopolitan leading away his dupe on a darkened ship; Billy Budd, disregarding its epilogue, leaves us with Billy hanging

Christlike from the yardarm. Two scenes in Israel Potter, the hero's terrible entombment and his first view of London, are striking symbolic tableaux. Each compresses into a single scene realization, or epiphany, about Israel's life. They act metaphorically as synechdoches. This tendency toward symbolic tableaux, aided by an increasingly dramatic form of narrative, emphasizes Melville's trait of resolving into symbol all of the ambiguities of these difficult later books, thus allowing the multiplicity of interpretations which critics have, in fact, produced.

No one asserts that Melville had any clear theories about this technique he was pioneering. His symbols differ from those of the more sophisticated Symbolist poets in that they suggest themselves rather than being arbitrarily assigned by the poet to represent a particular mood or idea. Thus Melville is never esoteric, as Yeats is. Rather, he recognized a symbol when he had one and knew how to exploit it, but this recognition worked for symbols of cultural and archetypal significance and rarely for those with purely personal reference.[6] Such personal references as do exist may even be unconscious. As George C. Homans recognized as early as 1932,

> Melville was very much alive to the symbolic possibilities of any relationship and threw a symbol into his books for what it was worth whenever it excited a vague feeling of importance, but for any symbol Melville felt not one defined meaning but "endless significancies."[7]

Melville's own statement to Mrs. Hawthorne, that he was unaware of a large part of the "allegoricalness" of Moby-Dick before she pointed it out to him, argues that he was primarily an unconscious symbolist. But his technique in that work reveals a powerful awareness of symbols and their ambiguity. There is the mysterious painting in the inn for which every observer has a different interpretation; there is the famous analysis of the doubloon as viewed by various crew members, ending with Pip's famous conjugation of "to see"; there is a sustained and deliberate attempt to show the various significances of the white whale for Ahab and key members of his crew. This is technique, the part of an author's work most likely to be conscious. Pierre contains a passage, cited in our chapter on the gothic novel, indicating the narrator's awareness of the symbolic freight carried by the stereotypes of the light and dark girls. His confusion of these identities is therefore presumed to be deliberate.

Two recent studies of novelistic form provide other terminology for considering what we have called the symbolic tendencies of Melville's later novels. David O. Grossvogel's Limits of the Novel[8] asserts that novels have increasingly become aesthetic objects whose interest lies in their interesting "pattern" rather than lifelike histories told by a reliable historian. From the conventions

of Elizabethan drama and contemporary novels of the gothic, sentimental, and novel of manners schools, Pierre draws its warp and woof. But its pattern is determined by more "modern" concerns, both psychological and symbolic. Considering Pierre as a pattern, or symbolic configuration, allows us to accept its ambiguity without demanding a definitive explanation of its meanings. Much the same approach has been applied successfully by Gordon Bigelow[9] to the enigmas of "Bartleby." There is, of course, a close relationship between symbolism and structuralism in novels, since an individual symbol functions in a symbolic matrix which gives it additional significance. If, for example, we discuss Isabel as representing darkness, sex, non-rationality, artistic inspiration, the femme fatale, etc., we may exhaust our ingenuity in listing her possibilities. But when we place her in a triangle with Pierre and Lucy, we see that the meanings of the novel as a whole depend on the give and take between Isabel's symbolic reverberations and those of Lucy and Pierre. Static, she is far more limited.

Alan Friedman, in The Turn of the Novel,[10] introduces the terms "closed" and "open" to distinguish between novels which present a world understood in terms of a particular moral code and those which do not. Obviously, the former type is "traditional" while the latter has become

increasingly common in modern literature. Those novels which seemed anomalous to their contemporary audiences are often simply early examples of open form. Friedman classifies both Moby-Dick and Pierre in this category because both novels leave the reader with multiple possibilities and refuse to give a final interpretation of the moral significance of the events they relate. Both books demonstrate the aspect of translogical writing which has most import for Melville, plurisignation, which he called "ambiguity." Ambiguity is not merely an attribute of Pierre; it is an architectural principle.

Let us examine the various symbolic components of the novel and their levels of meanings, after which we shall attempt to examine the entire pattern of the novel. First of all, there is the symbolic landscape of country and city, manor house and tenement building. The house at Saddle Meadows is diametrically opposed to the Apostles'. The former is presented in summer, the latter in winter; luxury is opposed to physical discomfort, beauty to drabness. Although both buildings are old, one is a shrine to its illustrious builders while the other has desecrated its founders' altar and serves as a refuge for numerous types of revolutionaries. Its retention of the church's name is ironic in that sense. However, the original Apostles were revolutionaries too. As the ancestor-worshipping society is shown to be corrupt, the building's name takes on a

favorable significance. The name Saddle Meadows, in contrast, bears the connotation of sitting still in time and also echoes of bloodshed on the spot. The symbolic tableau related in the introduction--the old general fallen from his horse but cheering on his troops from his stationary saddle--carries all of that ambiguity. Even the cause for which the battle was fought is morally doubtful, as the Indians did own that land originally. We add another layer, a personal one, to our symbolic cake by tracing, as critics have, the originals of both buildings to a Melville family house and a commercial building Melville knew of in New York.

These two edifices are epitomes of two differing environments, the country and the city. In Western writing, we can look back to Genesis for traditional views of these two environments. The city, be it Sodom, Juvenal's Rome, Johnson's London, or Melville's New York, is the home of corruption and filth. In the country one finds clean air and innocent pursuits, but at the price of ignorance. The country bumpkin is a stock comic butt, always an easy mark for the clever city boy. The stereotypes of country and city provide a focus for such polar opposites as health and sickness, innocence and depravity, peace and turmoil, nature and artifice, etc.--all the apparently unfavorable ones belonging to the city. But these "evils" of civilized

life are also sources of knowledge. One can sing only songs of innocence in the country; for songs of experience, the artist must enter the city. Melville might complain about New York and actually leave the city for his own equivalent of a Sabine farm; nevertheless the metropolis meant life and intellect to him, as it did to most writers. Johnson, for all his complaints, insisted that the man who was tired of London was tired of life. Pierre's education as man and as artist requires that he leave his rustic seclusion and experience city life. The fact that this experience entails his ruin is part of the ambiguity in values present in the country-city stereotype. Both innocence and experience have their prices.

Placed in this symbolic landscape are symbolic characters. Again we have a pattern of polar oppositions with ambiguities in both alternatives. Pierre, the young hero, provides the link between many of the opposites. He is in motion between them and cannot be said to represent any fixed position. He is, rather, an Everyman, or at least an Every-artist. Lucy is a polar figure. She is repeatedly tagged with the label "angel." Her light coloring, ethereal form, radiant beauty, and apparent disinterest in sex might suit a Miltonic angel. Angels are incapable of evil, but such perfect rectitude may be incompatible with normal humanity, as Mark Twain demonstrates

in The Mysterious Stranger. Lucy's angelic nature throws a coldness around her as icy as her blue dress. Even her fiancé feels an awe of touching such an airy creature. Mentally, she is also untouchable. Pierre cannot tell this pure being about Isabel, who represents so many mortal failings. Lucy is, of course, a cultural stereotype of the pure heroine common in popular and especially gothic literature. It is rare, however, that this figure is given so much of Lucy's coldness at the same time she is held up as an ideally good character. Hilda in Hawthorne's Marble Faun is perhaps the closest example of this character treated with similar ambiguity.

Isabel is Lucy's opposite pole. Physically dark, she is attractive in a sexual rather than an ethereal fashion. Whereas Lucy is well educated, Isabel can barely read and never seems to reason. The clear light implied by the name "Lucy" is entirely murky in Isabel. Isabel lacks a firm moral sense, asking others for guidance. She is dependent, whereas Lucy appears self-sufficient. She is, in short, a frail mortal woman rather than an angel. These very qualities, though apparently not as desirable as Lucy's, give Isabel the warmth that Lucy lacks. She is capable of sin, which is something of a relief after Lucy. Isabel, too, is drawn from a popular fictional character, the "dark heroine," who is more fully discussed

in our chapter on the gothic novel. Her fierce intensity and her primitiveness, however, are much exaggerated from the hint of passion usually present in this character. This makes it more difficult to assign a moral evaluation to Isabel than to her fictional prototypes.

Other pairs of polar oppositions besides that of mortal and immortal cluster around these two symbolic girls. They also represent two ways of life, "man's earthly household peace"[11] and the quest for God and ultimate reality; or, as Pierre puts it, "Lucy or God?"[12] With Lucy he can be content with his home and heritage, living a benign and useful life. He can cling to his own doorstep as the catnip, a simple herb, does. Or he can go seeking ever further like the amaranth. In this case Isabel will be his guide. This quest is always a destructive one in Melville. Like Taji and Ahab, Pierre will bring ruin on himself and others. The amaranth is a well-chosen symbol for this too, since it interferes with the growth of useful crops. The pursuit of Isabel is the decision to become an artist; she is a kind of muse, and Lucy a housebound saint. Isabel is an active principle, Lucy a static one. This choice of lifestyle applies not only to Melville's own situation but to artists in all times and all ages. The choice of the more difficult and painful path reflects credit on the youthful aspirant; it is a sort of apology for art. Pierre's choice is also the act of a

mythic hero. In his willingness to sacrifice his personal comfort and go forth to seek adventure, he is another Ulysses. Like a typical mythic hero, he seeks something which will be of benefit to mankind, in this case a metaphysical truth. Pierre now begins to take on an identity, that of hero, as a result of his relationship to these other symbolic characters.

Melville has been called a primitivist, and there is no doubt that his contacts with other cultures gave him a basis from which to consider his own Western cultural heritage. Lucy represents the best of that heritage. Her racial type, aristocratic background, education, trained artistic talent, sensitivity, and strict morality epitomize not only New England but Anglo-Saxon Europe as well. Isabel's racial type is foreign, her education primarily derived from nature, her music undisciplined, her morality fluid. She is more primitive even than Fayaway, who retained at least the light restraints of her own culture. Isabel belongs to no culture. She possesses all of the passionate energy that we associate with a primitive. She is in touch with objects, such as her guitar, and can evoke their divine essences. Her own body radiates magical force. All of this power disappears in a girl of refinement such as Lucy. Lucy is pale, Isabel vividly colored. Pierre is drawn to that which he, and his entire culture, have lacked, a revitalizing contact with man's early nature. Lucy's

light is the light of reason and science erected by a great culture; Isabel's darkness is the mystery of life which is beyond the reach of that light. Light is archetypally associated with the male principle, darkness with the female. Thus Lucy, though clearly a female figure, represents a rational, ordered, male-oriented culture. This is not unusual; Dante's Lucia, whom she resembles, is a similarly contrived symbol for an ordered universe. Isabel has the traditional female associations with darkness, fertility, and chaos.

Associated with the opposition of primitive to civilized life are related issues: joyful celebration versus guilt or abstention from sex, emotion versus reason, natural versus conventional morality, and so on. Isabel and Lucy accrue meanings from these peripheral issues, as well. Both the girls have something very important to offer--Lucy's sweetness and light, Isabel's power and passion. Choice between them is impossible, for their roles are complementary. It is for this reason that Lucy returns toward the end of the book and Pierre is finally poised between his two "angels." Lucy and Isabel function as a yin and yang pair, but Pierre fails to realize that. Instead of accepting their complementary coexistence, he insists that choices be made.

Melville constantly taunts us with another, extremely important, opposition, that of good and bad. But these are

value judgments. A symbolic novel does not make value judgments. Thus every use of them is ambiguous. Even when Isabel calls herself a "bad angel," she is merely going by the standards of the dominant culture, not applying the broader perspective available to the reader.

Pierre's final adieu to "good angel and bad angel both" fails to specify which is which. The ending, like the dying Pierre, is "neuter." We never know whether the country is preferable to the city, angels to mortals, civilization to primitivism, remaining at home to questing. A vast, multilevel web of ambiguity is woven between the two symbolic poles of Lucy and Isabel.

Minor characters in the novel also have symbolic functions. Mary Glendinning portrays the stifling aspects of social convention and ancestral heritage. It is her power, not some abstract family loyalty, that Pierre must break in order to continue his own development. The artist must be somewhat outside his society if he is to be effective. On a cultural level, she stands for our entire system of social taboos. She defines for Pierre the role of "gentleman" which he must fulfill. The limitations of this role include the avoidance of anything coarse or vulgar: any reference to such natural functions as excretion or sex, and any appearance of undue appetite for food; any undue violence; any tendencies, in other words, to

recognize one's animal nature. She scolds Pierre for his appetite, his "ranting" enthusiasm, and his eagerness to be married. Because of her symbolic position, Mrs. Glendinning naturally wishes to see Pierre marry Lucy, and she feels an instinctive antipathy to Isabel. On an archetypal level, she suggests the powerful mother-goddess who must be propitiated and whose wrath proves highly dangerous to the hero. Her power to harm Pierre continues long after he leaves her, thanks to her control of the estate. She catapults him into penury, which on a realistic level is a major factor in his ruin. There are suggestions of supernatural power about her: her enduring youth and beauty, her force of character, and her moments of Athene-like martial stiffness. She is, however, more like Venus than Athene, resembling a revengeful Venus persecuting Cupid and Psyche.

That Glen Stanly is a double for Pierre we have already established in an earlier chapter. He is that which Pierre might have been if Isabel had never entered his life. Glen is totally absorbed in his social duties and poses, lacking any real depth. He is presented unfavorably because of his cruelty to Pierre. Nevertheless, on a material level he is infinitely better off than Pierre. This reflects the same ambiguity of values which Pierre laments in his prison: "Had I been heartless now, disowned,

and spurningly portioned off the girl at Saddle Meadows, then had I been happy through a long life on earth, and perchance through a long eternity in heaven!"[13]

Charlie Millthorpe is the loyal but uncomprehending friend who helps his hero out of many difficulties. Lacking Pierre's intellectual equipment, Millthorpe is not capable of getting into Pierre's plight. For this he is almost enviable. The peculiar faculty which determines an artist is also the source of much suffering which the individual of lesser perception completely avoids. The dichotomy between Pierre and Millthorpe is another version of the innocence/experience polarity. Millthorpe is also a comic figure who plays Sancho Panza to Pierre's Quixote. His closeness to reality assists his knight-errant in many ways, often unrecognized. Probably the parallels from Don Quixote are quite deliberate. On a more mythical level, Millthorpe resembles the hero's loyal friend, a Patroclus to Pierre's Achilles, Horatio to his Hamlet, Bedivere to his Arthur. This friend is never able to help with the final heroic ordeal, however; the ill-fated hero must endure that alone. Thus the officious Millthorpe is not present when Pierre races into the street to face Glen.

Delly Ulver is a female counterpart of Millthorpe, though less developed. She is a less perceptive character than Isabel, but more in touch with reality. She is the one

who actually fulfills their daily necessities in her function as maid to Pierre and Isabel. Although Melville made Isabel earn her living as a domestic (no other means of support was realistically available to a girl in her position), one really cannot imagine the exotic Isabel scrubbing floors. Delly has committed adultery and has suffered for it. Her motivations, sexual desire and maternal grief, are basic and simple. She grieves for the loss of her child and her rejection by the community. Isabel's highly complex nature does not permit this kind of understanding of the wellsprings of her character. If she lacked this complexity, she might well have become what Delly is; indeed, her neighbors suspect that she is an outcast from her own village for sins similar to Delly's. But Isabel's sexual transgression may or may not exist. If it does, it is a far more terrible one than Delly's. Delly is incapable of the exquisite torment that Isabel experiences, and so she is to some extent luckier. Delly and Millthorpe are on a plane of fairly normal humanity which serves as an implied comparison to the exalted plane of aesthetic sensibility inhabited by Pierre and Isabel, and Lucy as well.

In this symbolic setting, these symbolic characters are involved in symbolic action. The pattern of the novel consists not simply of static symbolic entities, but in their

relationships to one another. It would be an entirely different novel if Pierre had gone from city to country instead of the direction he travelled; the symbolic statement would be entirely different. Similarly, it is important that Pierre turns from Lucy to Isabel, not vice-versa. The tendency of a novel of this sort is to show the progress of a youthful understanding toward ever-higher planes. It is in many respects a bildungsroman, specifically one concerned with the growth of an artist. Thus the placing of the city and Isabel later in the novel than Saddle Meadows and Lucy is a way of implying that they are closer to mature truth. The steady deterioration of the hero's material fortunes forms a counterpart in this novel to the apparent growth of his comprehension. This is, of course, the pattern of tragedy; and Pierre is, as we have seen, partly in the mold of Shakespearean tragedy. The action of the novel shows a progression away from society and toward total alienation, but lacks the reconciliation of tragedy.

Pierre's alienation proceeds systematically. He lives first at home, then at an inn near his home, then in a distant tenement, and finally in a dungeon. These are presided over by his mother, a fatherly man and "shooting companion" well acquainted with his family, then by the friendly but modern and rootless Millthorpe, and finally by a turnkey who is a total stranger. The death of Mary

Glendinning severs the last tie Pierre has with his ancestral line. Lucy's estrangement and return has already been discussed in terms of the complementary opposites that she and Isabel represent. Her return modifies the pattern of steady progression and serves to create a confusion of values. Pierre's educational experiences may have led him in a wrong direction, a conclusion also enforced by satiric techniques present in the novel. It is in this that Pierre differs from a work like Wilhelm Meister, which it superficially resembles. The hero never sees a light at the end of his tunnel.

On a mythic plane, the novel continues this perverse habit of falling into a familiar symbolic pattern only to deviate in a crucial area. In The Hero with a Thousand Faces,[14] Joseph Campbell describes the typical myth involving a hero. There are, in the completed pattern, three stages--separation, initiation, and return. Early in the narrative the hero receives a call to adventure, often in the form of an encounter with an other-world being. He must then decide whether to accept the call. He is free to refuse it, but if he is of properly heroic timber he will generously sacrifice his personal safety and comfort in order to obtain something which promises to be of infinite benefit to his people. Pierre's call comes in the form of his encounter with the mysterious Isabel.

His response to the call is unequivolcally heroic. The boon he seeks is nothing less than absolute moral truth. Often the hero is given an other-world being for a guide and helper. The guide may be sexually attractive, as Isabel certainly is. The guide may also be treacherous (cf. Mephistopheles). There is a strong possibility that Isabel's influence is, perhaps unconsciously, of this sort.

Beyond the circle of his native village the hero must cross a threshold. It is often guarded by a dangerous gatekeeper. Wit or knowledge may be useful in conquering the guardian when brute strength fails. Pierre's entry into New York and his encounter with the hack-driver correspond to this crossing of the threshold. The cabman is in fact called a "Charon." There are echoes of Aeneas' descent into Hell as well as Dante's. His rudimentary knowledge of city ways is Pierre's only resource in this encounter, since the presence of the police prohibits any use of force. Once he has entered the myth-landscape, the arena of his actions, the hero faces a variety of trials testing his wit and courage. These are often concerned with a dangerous mother-goddess. Also involved may be a reconciliation with a father-god from whom the people have become estranged. Pierre's problems with his mother and his father in Heaven are highly significant in this context. Successful completion of all his trials results in the hero's

obtaining a magical elixir which can revitalize and reconsecrate his secular world. In order to return, however, he must traverse the threshold, this time among new dangers. The hero who completes this second passage is a resurrected being and can give his world vicariously a similar rebirth.

That is the completed pattern, but often a tale does not follow through the entire cycle. The hero may refuse the initial challenge; he may fail in any one of his trials; he may refuse to return after a success, preferring to enjoy felicity himself. Pierre obviously fails in his quest, but we can trace no single trial in which he is found wanting. Yet no revelation of the father-god occurs, and no elixir is forthcoming. Melville plays a frightening variation of the mythic pattern in suggesting, with this omission, that no god and/or no elixir of absolute truth does, in fact, exist. That is why Pierre fails despite his unselfishness, courage, beauty, intelligence, and other superb heroic qualifications. He will never be reborn, never revitalize the secular world, because these things are impossible. Pierre retells a myth while negating mythic possibilities. It questions the archetypal basis of every religion from savage to supercivilized. That is one of the blackest implications we can get from the pattern of Pierre. Again the pattern almost followed proves a most effective technique. The pattern promises to deliver the expected,

but its variations from the expected are its most significant elements.

Each major element in the novel--setting, plot, and character--contributes to the symbolism of the whole, yet none of them carries a key to the whole. There is no single key. The book is iconic; it is a created object which has no exact equivalent. It has many correspondences with external reality, nevertheless, and its tableaux function as synechdochic illuminations of the human experience. These two paradoxical qualities, iconic uniqueness and external significance, can coexist because of the deliberate vagueness of the symbolist novel. Melville's structural principle of paired opposites can be traced throughout the novel. Its function is to provide an alternative for every apparent truth, so that meaning is in a constant state of oscillation according to one's perspective. Other symbolist writings may allow for more than two viewpoints at all times. Perhaps because of his interest in religious archetypes, which usually emphasize polar dyads, Melville tends to present most issues in terms of two possibilities, mutually exclusive but apparently both true.

Meaning in the symbolist novel never stands still. It is a process to which the reader contributes, and it is modified by its context. No single place, action, or

character, if abstracted from the novel, has exactly the significance that it attains in its proper place. We illustrated this in the case of Isabel. Aside from what she suggests of herself, she is important as the alternative to Lucy in Pierre's mental struggle. That function can only be fulfilled within the action of the novel. The plot, in turn, is a rather poor affair without its backdrop of urban and rural environments and their auras of significance. But with all its suggestiveness, its promises of meaning, the book reveals nothing. The symbolist novel approaches the "pure" art form of music, as it uses words to create effects rather than to denote clear concepts. Melville plays with Pierre as Isabel

> played her mystic guitar till Pierre felt chapter after chapter born of its wondrous suggestiveness; but alas! eternally incapable of being translated into words; for where the deepest words end, there music begins with its supersensuous and all-confounding intimations.[15]

Familiar patterns are cast aside before they can reveal too much. The symbolist author chooses the method of indirection. The good guys cannot wear white hats, nor the blonde heroine win her man. Indirection, vagueness, plurisignation, the dependence of meaning on context, illuminating tableaux which function as synechdoches, coupled with an overwhelming sense of an impending revelation which never quite comes, are all techniques of the

symbolist writer. In Pierre, Melville uses them all to successfully create a symbolist work. Traditional criticism cannot deal fairly with such a work if it insists on naming equivalents and selecting single perspectives. Once again we must apply to Melville techniques developed for dealing with twentieth century works.

NOTES

[1]The Burning Fountain: A Study in the Language of Symbolism (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana Univ. Press, 1954).

[2]William York Tindall, The Literary Symbol (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana Univ. Press, 1967), p. 68.

[3]Ibid., p. 69.

[4]For a complete study of this progression, see Edmund Wilson, Axel's Castle: A Study in the Imaginative Literature of 1870-1930 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948).

[5]Charles Feidelson, Jr., Symbolism and American Literature (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 43

[6]Philip Wheelwright, in Metaphor and Reality (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana Univ. Press, 1967), lists levels of meanings for literary symbols. A symbol may be important only for one poem, or for one artist, or it may have ancestral force, cultural force, or archetypal force. We shall be using this concept in our discussion.

[7]George C. Homans, "The Dark Angel: The Tragedy of Herman Melville," New England Quarterly, 5 (1932), 703.

[8]Limits of the Novel: Evolutions of a Form from Chaucer to Robbe-Grillet (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1968).

[9]"The Problem of Symbolist Form in Melville's 'Bartleby the Scrivener'," Modern Language Quarterly, 31 (1970), 345-58.

[10]The Turn of the Novel: The Transition to Modern Fiction (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966).

[11]Pierre, p. 405.

[12]Ibid., p. 213.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 424.

[14] (New York: Pantheon Books, 1961).

[15] *Pierre*, p. 332.

CONCLUSION

This study has not exhausted the list of models which may have influenced Pierre, or of the genres into which it can be classified. It has shown that, far from being a chaotic and unplanned outburst, Pierre is in fact a compendium of several definite patterns. None of these patterns is entirely adequate as a total description of the novel, as each one is abandoned at some crucial point. The tension created by this maneuver keeps the reader perpetually unsettled, and is the primary technical method used to create the novel's "ambiguities." The book's elusive promise of pattern and meaning reflects a vision of the universe, which appeared to Melville equally tantalizing. The metaphysical questions raised in Moby-Dick form the essence of Pierre, which is designed to embody them. The book itself is an icon, referring to itself and the peculiar world it describes. Paradoxically, it is also a model. Melville's consistently ironic attitude toward his fictional creation allows a multitude of valid meanings to coexist. Similarly, the god-figure in Pierre is remarkable for his silence, leaving mankind as a whole in the same state as Melville's bewildered reader.

Life has several aspects which coexist, embodied

in several coexisting genres. The novel of manners takes as its subject matter the social transactions which form so large a part of daily life. The life of the mind, explored in both the gothic and psychological modes, exists apart from this polite and rational society. It may include material which is frightening and disturbing. Life is both tragic and comic--tragic for its inevitable futility, comic for its exaggerated view of its own importance. The Elizabethan drama and the Menippean satire are in this case complementary. Together they encompass the highest and the lowest of human actions. All of these possibilities are represented by Melville's skillful exploitation of the techniques of symbolism in this highly symbolic work.

Some of the aspects of Pierre's generic fusion are more obvious than others. The social and tragic aspects dominate the surface of the book. Looking just a bit deeper, the reader strikes symbolism and psychological analysis. Only as he fails to correlate these genres and their implications does the reader suspect satirical intent. The book is ironic in Northrop Frye's sense, that the author does not indicate which of several possible attitudes toward the narrative the reader should assume. Possible attitudes are suggested by the generic molds taken on and then cast off by this Protean novel. Should one assume urbane tolerance as befits a novel of manners

or gravity befitting an Elizabethan tragedy? Indulge in a vicarious gothic adventure or practice psychoanalysis? Smile mockingly with the satirist or cross into the poetic world of the symbolist? The principle of plurisignation makes symbolism a useful instrument for the ironic author, as numerous and even contradictory significances can coexist. In this sense, "ironic" is the closest we can come to a final word on Pierre.

The ambiguity of Pierre is the result of consistent techniques and can therefore be presumed to be deliberate. Eclecticism is the primary technique, assisted by the distortion of value-implying aspects within each genre and by the principle of organization in opposing pairs, polar dyads. That Melville knew what he was doing is shown by his selection of "The Ambiguities" as his subtitle. Pierre is a novel of and about ambiguity; it is the thing it attempts to describe. Ambiguity is there not because Melville could not make up his mind about the nature of reality, but because at the time he wrote Pierre he had reached the conclusion that human perceptions could never be more than partial. He created another multifaceted model of the universe in The Confidence Man. Apparently he did not feel that Pierre had been entirely successful. Its rich complexity bewildered readers and its satiric effects were perhaps too well hidden. In his next attempt

he used a greatly simplified structure, a single day and a single setting with a singular character. I suggest that Pierre is to The Confidence Man as Mardi is to Moby-Dick. The prototype works are complex, disorganized, and borrow so heavily from other authors that they can be called derivative. The second attempts are simplified and highly original.

We have traced some of the literary influences on Pierre. Drawing on the entire mass of world literature, Melville created a work which is extremely allusive but which combines its allusions in original ways. The author follows his own advice that no single work, however great, should serve as a complete guide for the creation of new literature. We have a glimpse of the creative mind at work as we see how derivative pieces undergo a sea-change as they are modified and combined for purposes far different than their original functions. Autobiographical elements undeniably exist, as they do in all of Melville's novels, but they are by no means the primary material, and they are integrated into the literary sources to form an interwoven fabric. Considerable artistry is involved in such a fusion.

Tracing the genre patterns in Pierre proves to be a fruitful approach. It has long been a principle of scientific investigation that when two theories explain

the existing phenomena equally well, the investigator chooses the one which leads to further experimentation. Considering Pierre as the product of the author's pathological depression, apparently the dominant theory at present, is a dead-end approach. Multi-genre analysis, on the other hand, opens vast areas for literary exploration. It is a technique which is particularly applicable to Melville studies and should be used more frequently. Its chief virtue is that it avoids judging the work on the basis of extrinsic factors, or by the standards of a model which it was never designed to resemble. A rough-edged genius like Melville's is best handled in such a fashion, as few of our critical habits will mesh with his unorthodox works.

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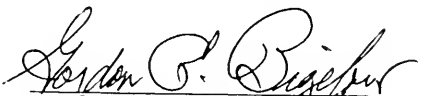

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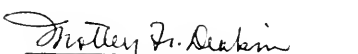

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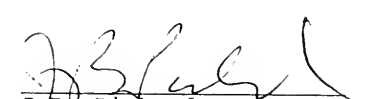

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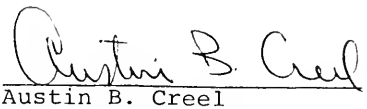

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This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of English in the College of Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate Council, and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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